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Elizabeth of England

A Dramatic Romance

IN FIVE PARTS

BY

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PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

V.

I. The Coronation
II. The Rival Queens
III. Armada Days
IV. The Death of Essex
V. The Passing of the Queen

The Passing of the Queen

By

N. S. SHALER

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PROLOGUE

THERE is no action in this final act,
No doing of brave deeds; the hearts are still
That beat as sounding drums when up the hill
We marched to victories. The scene 's a tract
Of moors all blossomless with lonely ways
Mid pitiless storms, whereon the Lord doth will
The soul unchastened wander while it fill
With hunger for His peace. Yet its sad days
Share of the heaven's splendour; though no bloom
Or dance of youth, or tread of soldier's feet
Light its hard fields, its stunted herbs are sweet
And to the silent footfalls send perfume
As halting age slow creeps unto its goal
To find there Christ awaiting for its soul.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Archbishop of Canterbury.
Lord Howard.
Sir Robert Carey.
Sir Robert Cecil.
Sir Harry Compton.
Sir John Spencer.
Sir Walter Ralegh.
Speaker of Commons.
Francis Bacon.
Priest.
Physician.
Player.
Keeper of Hatfield House.
Lieutenant of Tower.
Officer.
Chamberlain.
Usher.
Robin.
Tom Fielding.
Roderick, Barnard } *Guards.*
Old John, *Servant of the* Queen.
Giles, *a Farmer.*
Old Man.

Dramatis Personae

Biron.

Queen Elizabeth.
Lady in Waiting.
Wife of Robin.
Tire-woman.
Dame Fielding.
Old Woman.
Child.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Court, Officers, Citizens, Soldiers, Servants, etc.

The Passing of the Queen

ACT FIRST

SCENE I

LONDON STREETS.

QUEEN *in procession with* CECIL *by her. Pause in the course.*

ELIZABETH.

HERE went we, Cecil, in that yesterday
To take our crown. Oh, then it seemed so fair,
So jewelled with the memories of deeds
And glint of deeds to do! You mind that day,
For then you were beside us, young and brave,
Yet wise for all our needs.

CECIL. Ah, my dear Queen —

ELIZ. Alas! it was thy sire, — 't is long ago!
Yet in our ears there rings the shout of joy
When they beheld their lass come as their lord;
It drowned the clamour of all London's bells,
Shook that girl's heart and filled her with strange fear, —
For love too may be fearful, — sent her on
Unto her weary task with heart to toil
For all her loving folk. — But now they 're still
And lowering look on us. What doth it mean?

CECIL. My liege, it is another folk than then,
With other solemn joys. 'T is, as you 've said,
Long time ago. A realm may wax as man
Out of its youth to age, — change, yet be true
To all its nobler self.

ELIZ. We would not have
Our people mourn and old; we 'll speak to them.
[*To People.*] Heed ye, dear folk, we 're here to see ye glad
As when we went this way to be your Queen.
Where are the dancers and the merry songs,
The flowers for our way, the welcoming
Of eyes that loved us then?

BLIND OLD MAN. Hail, England's lass!
I cannot see ye more, and yet I see

That day ye came to save us. Know, dear Queen,
The parsons are the matter, — they have preached
The life of us away.

ELIZ. [*aside to Old Man*]. Ay, man, 't is true
The killjoys have our folk. [*To Throng.*] Is it for this
The woman God set o'er ye gave her life?
Think ye it was for bauble of a crown
She spared ye strokes to take them on her soul,
Stayed barren stock and withered to her age?
Nay, ye mum dolts, it was to make ye glad,
To have her folk the merriest of earth,
Go blithely on from cradle to the grave. —
Out on ye, tombstones of your blessed sires,
Ye lack your living for the fear of death
And shame the Lord who sent ye to this land
Made for your blessing.

VOICE. Give our Essex back
And we will shout again.

ELIZ. Ay, would I could,
And we would shout together in our joy
And share the shame of it. Ye know right well
He went for England's need.

BLIND OLD MAN [*to Throng*]. Shame on yon knave:
He knows as we our dear lord died for her

But blundered to his death; — that she 'd glad give
The heart that 's in her for to win him back.

ELIZ. [*to Blind Man*]. Come hither, man. [*Taking his hand.*] Thy hand is hard with toil,
Yet thou hast fitting heart to know a king's.
We thank thee for thy service. [*To People.*] Ay, my folk,
That this man is of ye tells us faith holds
Where we have found it in our sorry days. —
Farewell, good people; we 'll not further go
Upon this ancient way unto our crown.
This is a weary woman, childless, old;
That crown was made of thorns. Farewell, farewell;
Your Queen would know ye happy.

[*Acclaim from old people; youths silent.*

GIRL. Is that the Queen they tell of, she who went
Fair as the May to crowning? Sure it is
Her grandame, not herself.

BLIND MAN. Go to, thine eyes
Are blinder than mine own. Ay, her dear voice
Tells her our England's lass. It is the same
That outsang lark upon that blessed day
And gave our hearts the morning.

ELIZ. [*to* CECIL]. 'T is farewell, Cecil.

CECIL. Dear liege, 't is hail. Hail to another day
Than that ye welcomed then; yet 't is the morn
Of a fair day. Ye found this realm a child;
Ye 've led it to its strength. It looks no more
Upon its toys, but forth to far-off goals,
Whereto ye 've shown the way.

ELIZ. We planted for good harvest; see ye, here
Are fields of sorry tares.

CECIL. Yea, my good liege,
Our earth is wearied by the plenteous store
We 've shorn from it this age, and it must lie
In the rude fallow of forgetfulness
Ere it again yield corn.

ELIZ. Oh my Cecil,
'T is very ill within this house of mine,
The house which is my heart. It cannot stay
If so its strength goes hopelessly to doom
And leaves my people wearying and old.
It must be mended or I hapless die,
Leaving but ruins for the knaves to wreck
Of all we 've builded on the sands of time.
Help me, good Cecil, that it be set right.

CECIL. Live on, my liege, live on; each day that sees
Thy sun in our good sky helps ripe the grain

Of the brave harvest. Come what will, 't is sure;
And its good seed shall sow a mighty realm
Which none may trample down, the seed of men
Who are your children, born of all your pangs,
Nursed near your mother's heart.

ELIZ. Ah, counselor,
You sail the blessed sky save when you delve
Like grubbing mole in earth. 'T is good to hear
Your far-up song; now be with me the mole
To delve to our foundations. There 's discontent
That turns those stones to sand. What is to do?
Where is our mayor? Bides he still alone
To nurse his sore?

CECIL. Ay, he lives still for that.

ELIZ. We would see Harry Compton; send him here;
We 'll find balm for that wound. Bring it about
The Commons come to us. Belike they 'll show
This realm as sore as London and Sir John.
We 'll seek the physic, take the sorry dose
With what content we may. — So see it done.

[*Exit.*

CECIL. There is again the woman and the King.

End of Scene.

SCENE II

CHAMBER OF QUEEN AT WHITEHALL.

ELIZABETH.

Enter SIR HARRY COMPTON.

ELIZABETH. Welcome, Sir Harry, we have sent for thee
On a grave matter of our commonwealth.
How is it in thy house?

COMPTON. My liege, that house
Is but a little matter in your realm;
It is a narrow place.

ELIZ. Nay, my good knight,
It hath a roof tree, and beneath it dwell
Folk near to us, whose sorrows and whose joys
Sum to a kingdom. We would know ye well
And happy in your lot.

COMPTON. Ah, then, my Queen, we 're sad
My dame comes to her time in sorrowing
O'er parting with her sire. Of her dear home
She has her mother's grave; of sometime wealth
The scanty needs she patches. Yea, he 's hard:
He turned her laden, pleading for her child
She would have born within it, from his door
And scoffed her as a beggar.

ELIZ. He 's stiff necked;

We 'll bend him, crook his knees to set her right,
Or he shall have our throne.

COMPTON. He 'd scout the Lord
If He should bid him do it.

ELIZ. We 'll not bid
Nor beg, but take him in a gentle trap
Set in himself. Ah, but we know him well
In sundry myriads of our realm who make
Ruling a torment till we know their shape, —
Each one a pudding with scant plums of flint,
The rest all dough. They 'd break a dragon's teeth,
But with a little wit we cut them through.

COMPTON. My mistress sets a riddle.

ELIZ. Let it stay
Until it reads itself. Bring here the child —
God send it be a lad and not a lass —
With its fair mother for the christening,
For we will be its gossip. Then we 'll see
How 't is with Sir John's neck. Farewell, my knight;
Thy Queen 's half merry with what she will do
With Sir Omnipotence of London town.

COMPTON. And we 'll be merry in the hope you lend;
Unshaped it still is hope from our dear Queen,
And that is all of promise to our hearts.

End of Scene.

SCENE III

COUNCIL ROOM AT WHITEHALL.

ELIZABETH *and* CECIL.

ELIZABETH. How with our Commons?

CECIL. They send here, my liege,
The best of their estate to bear you thanks
For your large purposes.

ELIZ. We wish them well
And wish ourself well ridden of this task. —
Ay, there 's to be a shearing; diverse rams
Who 've found fat pastures in our fields shall be
Shorn to the hide; they 'll know how winter bites. —
We 'll find some wolves when shears have done their work
Upon the monstrous fleeces. Look to one
Who set him forth for wool a while ago
And now shall hie back shorn.

CECIL. Nay, he is wise
And knows right well his part. The shears will leave
Him faithful servant if they leave his bones.

ELIZ. Would he might nip, for there we 'd find him cure.

Ah, he is wise, — that 's sometimes trick of knaves
And then their worst offence.

Enter USHER.

USHER. Your majesty,
A message from your Commons.

ELIZ. Bid them here.

Enter Deputation of Commons.

Welcome, our faithful liegemen, say ye bring
The good will of our people, so our heart
May have its life anew.

SPEAKER OF COMMONS. Your majesty,
Ye see here seven score of sturdy men
Bearing that blessed burthen to your feet;
They lay it there, yet all is left behind
Of our unbounded love.

ELIZ. 'T is bravely said;
Ay, royally, to move the heart of king
In service of his folk; yea, with his life.
Who could not be a king for such a crown,
And lift his head, however sore it weighed,
To gaze far o'er his land? Help us to see
Where we may strike or spare to make our own
Richer wherein to live, wherein to die,
To grace our cradles or to bless our graves.
Speak from your hearts to ours.

SPEAKER. Dear majesty,

Upon this tribute of our love we lay
Prayer for our lives that we be no more rent
By all the ravined wolves that on us come
Sheltered by law.

ELIZ. Who be those hungry wolves?
The keeper of this fold hath use for them.

SPEAKER. They be the host who with your patents armed,
Against your justice and the right of God,
Snatch all the earnings of your folk who toil
So that nor land nor seas, though plentiful,
May stay their hunger, give the mother milk
To tend her babe, or man the strength to serve
When ye shall need his service.

ELIZ. 'Sdeath! 't is true.
They come to us as lambs, lean, famished lambs,
Bleating for pasture, asking way to fields
Where they may join our flock. Shame on our eyes,
Old though they be, that saw not how the whelps
Were hidden 'neath false hides. Their end is here;
We 'll strip their fleeces, pluck their teeth, and send
The brutes unto their kind.

SPEAKER. Dear Queen, from knees
Worn in our prayers to God your servants rise
Knowing His grace is with them; rise as men

Who long have bent as slaves. They see their throne
In all the ancient splendour that your race,
Our people's lovers, gave it; wait your will
As folk who in your words have heard the Lord.

ELIZ. We 're quick to ask your service for good pay, —
Mayhap the last we 'll ask, yea, and the best.
Say to my people that I have tried to sway
This commonwealth in justice, but there came
Harpies and leeches who have sucked its blood.
Help me to find them as ye here have helped;
And think not that these weary, trembling hands
Lack strength to smite, for they are now made steel,
Knowing they serve my people. Bear to them
Love from their faithful lover; say that she
Doth hasten in the harvest of her years;
That if 't is hers to sow afar, she 'll take
This common love for seed-corn of her fields
And rear from it what maketh all true realms
Of earth or heaven. Farewell. Though ye have brought
A burthen to me, yet ye take away
That which doth light my heart. [*Exit Commons.*

[*To* CECIL.] Quick with this task:

We dare not sleep until the shears have done
Their twin swords' work.

CECIL. My liege, this task needs time.

ELIZ. Time needs the task, for now my nights are dark
And I must light them with the blessed sun
Of a new morning.

CECIL. Oh my liege, grave wrong
Will come of such swift deed.

ELIZ. A little wrong
To spot a mighty right. Be swift with it,
So that they know the stroke but when 't is done;
It is a host we smite; 't is well the blow
Come as a thunderbolt to strike them down
Together in the pit.

CECIL. This smiteth scores.

ELIZ. Each one ten thousand slays whom we must save.
See, there the sun goes down; this shall be done
Before his orb is hid.

CECIL. Nay, send for Puck
And bid him do this service; I 'm but man,
And know no way unto it.

ELIZ. I 'm a king
And know a monarch's might. [*Goes to her desk and writes swiftly.*] See, here, 't is done:

'All patents are revoked, all gains on way
Unto their holders go back whence they came.'
Doth that read plain?

CECIL. Ay, it is clearly writ.

ELIZ. Fair signed?

CECIL. Fair signed and sealed. It is swift law,
But law for that. It is a mighty deed.

ELIZ. [*looking forth*]. Go, sun, to rise upon a better day
Than thou hast glowered o'er. — I will to bed
And find its pillows soft. [*To* CECIL.] Go, send this law —
The Lord's and mine — swift onward through the dark
So my dear folk may wake and know their Queen
Rode with the sun to them. — 'T is wondrous strange
That ever I should welcome night again. [*Exit.*

CECIL [*alone*]. The heavens send us marvels. Yesterday
My mistress was so old the firm-set earth
Could scarce upbear her weary load of years;
To-day she smites like Ajax on hot field,
Knocks down our bravest houses as in play,
And then betakes her happily to bed. —
'T is done, — right nobly done, a faithful deed

That will breed faith afar. What it will send
Here in her court we presently must find,
Or meet perchance a tempest unprepared.
Ralegh 's the key to this ; I 'll look to him,
He 's loyal still, though all his soul 's a gale
To speed his argosies. If he stays, we 're safe ;
If he doth move, she must straight to her folk
And set her throne beside some kitchen fire
Until her yokels settle this account
As in the Tower's day they set it right. —
I will to him and find what is to do.

End of Scene.

SCENE IV

CHAMBER OF RALEGH.

RALEGH ; *afterwards* CECIL.

RALEGH [*alone*]. This summeth well ; a hundred thousand pounds
From Cornwall's mines ; from patents on all corn
As many more ; with this and that of tolls
Paid by our country folk enough to swell
The sum beyond our needs. In one year more
Our ships may forth a hundred sail to win
That empire of the west. Ay, we fare well :
He 's dead who stood betwixt us and our end :

The Queen is in her dotage and will go
Unrecking till she dies; and he who comes
Is bound by share of ventures to our plan.
'So runs the world away.' Yea, 't is the fool
Who lets it run; the wise man bids the stream
Turn his good mills for profit.

Enter CECIL.

Ho, Cecil!
Welcome, good friend, though you bring here a face
That tokens some ill news. What is it, man?
Is Essex's ghost abroad, or sends Spain here
Another fleet for us?

CECIL. Most like his ghost;
I had not thought of that. It smells of it
And moves in his swift way.

RALEGH. What is it, man,
To check your steadfast heart? A ghost is stuff
A breath may blow away.

CECIL. Ay, but a ghost,
Say some philosophers, may come to dwell
In living mortal's frame and shape its deeds
To strangest purposes; hold all its clews
Of self and memory, but turn the stream
Of action to new ends, while the poor thrall
Thus counterfeited bideth far away,
Dead mayhap years before. — Can such things be?

RALEGH. We have the proof of it when Cecil comes,
The ever wise, and plays his friend the fool.
What is this farce?

CECIL. 'T is a strange tragedy
To shake our hearts.

RALEGH. Her majesty is dead?

CECIL. Nay, much alive. The yesterday she went
Once more upon the way where as a lass
She crowned her with the joy of England's folk.
Oh, she was sorrowful and bent and old, —
Yea, like to die for all before her gone;
To-day she is a fury, swift and strong,
A warrior king with sword that swingeth on
With never reck of wounds.

RALEGH. 'T is but the flare
Of candle in its socket; it will pass
Quick to the darkness. There is nought to fear
From such impotent flamings but the end
That comes full soon.

CECIL. Hear me but through and judge
How impotent she is. This noon there came
A message from her Commons with a prayer
That she 'd annul all patents. Ay, 't was prayed
To move a heart of stone, — a cry for life

From her belovèd people: told they starved
So that the mothers could not milk their babes
Or men bear arms for her. Then straight she rose,
A whirlwind in her rage, and cried to God
That she would strip from ye those damning rights
Before the set of sun.

RALEGH. This is but dotard rage.
So old kings wear away: they soon forget;
They are like babes in that.

CECIL. Nay, but 't is done:
The order 's signed and couriers are sped
To bear it through the land. Ye all are stripped
Naked as ye were born.

RALEGH. This cannot be,
For thou wert there beside her and thy part
Is to scotch folly. That thou knowest well;
Thou wouldst but vex me here.

CECIL. No man could hold
Against that blast. Remember Tilbury field
And her fierce might that raged it. Think you how
We could have sent her to her samplers home?
You judge me jester: read what 's written here
And know it true. [*Hands him order.*

RALEGH [*reads*]. This needs swift remedy.

CECIL. What is thy cure?

RALEGH. We 'll halt this folly of her age and set
Strength on her throne.
CECIL. Go to your porch and hear
The shout that roars from London for this news:
He had the town behind him; you before.
There 's in her Tower block that still is wet
With her heart's blood. She fain would wash it out
With that of him who spilled it, for she knows
Whence the contriving came. If you but stir
The lion 's at your throat. 'T is famishing
For a swift leap.
RALEGH. We will all to the north;
Scotland is weary of her lingering here.
A month will see us back. So 't is delay
And not defeat we face.
CECIL. Nay, 't is the end,
For thy first stroke will send to her a flood
Of love awakened in her England's heart
To which the tide of Tilbury were a rill.
'T will besom Scotland, sweep thee to the deep;
Nay, try not that.
RALEGH. But she is old and worn,
But a poor ghost of sometime Tudor might;
A day afield would slay her.
CECIL. She a ghost?
A mighty man is in her and will stay

Till this task's done. And if she falls, her folk
Will make swift reckoning.

RALEGH. Thou art our foe,
Seeking to spy our plans; we put thee there
To be our helper. Thou shalt now elsewhere;
Thou 'lt find our strength: it is enough to break
A way barred by a hunchback who's contrived
To slave a dotard Queen. We laid him low
Who tried it yesterday.

CECIL. My sometime friend,
I 'm not thy foe, but servant of this realm;
The Lord hath crooked my body, but has left
Wit straight enough to match against a knave.
Go to thy closet, write of true men's deeds
Or scheme for empires. This good realm and folk
Are not for thy contriving.

[RALEGH *draws sword. At signal from* CECIL *guards enter.*

Nay, not that, —
Put up thy sword and hie back to thy place:
We would have histories and splendid dreams;
The world's awry when thou dost come to deeds
Where men must reckon on their fellow-men.
Thou art a hungerer of noble shape
With all the man left out.

End of Scene.

SCENE V

CHAMBER OF ELIZABETH AT WHITEHALL.

ELIZABETH *and* CECIL.

ELIZABETH. That order, — is it forth?
CECIL. Ay, my liege, 't is gone
To England's farthest nook.
ELIZ. What say our folk?
CECIL. Little, my Queen, yet in their straightened backs
They 're else than yesterday. They draw their breath
And look again away.
ELIZ. And they we smote?
Will they strike back?
CECIL. Some would, yet now none will;
They are confounded, for the deed was done
As stroke from cloudless sky.
ELIZ. So would we strike
Were 't ours to hurl the bolts; no thunder vain;
Let end announce the end, have the rogues wake
To question their tormentors how they came
Unknowing to their fate. 'T is merciful
And ever safest. — How is 't with Sir Wat?
Will he play traitor? He is hardest hit;

For with the clever greed his fancy masks
He 's drawn unto his coffers more than kings
E'er racked from this worn realm.

CECIL. He will be wise.

ELIZ. Still harping on his wisdom? He 's a fool,
For with his godlike parts he 's treacherous
E'en to his friends.

CECIL. Ay, my Queen, he is wise,
And yet a sorry knave.

ELIZ. Ho, thou hast found?

CECIL. Ay, liege, I 've lost a friend and found a knave;
He 's, as you say, a traitor in his heart,
Not swept to treason by fierce passion's tide
But trained by avarice.

ELIZ. No miser he,
But greedy for his visions. He feeds dreams
With corn to nourish empires, robs the poor
That men unborn may fatten. Watch him well:
Such men are dangerous: their fancy breeds
A host of dragons that may sudden forth
To waste this earth.

CECIL. He 'll wait some fairer time
Than this when all your land leans on your heart;
If any stir 't will be to face a storm

To which the Armada's gale were summer breeze.
So they will bide to watch and to contrive;

ELIZ. So must thou too, that we may lay our hand
On his contriving head. We dare not leave
This machinator in our land while we
Fare to the other.

CECIL. My liege, he 'll but dream:
He is a poet, with good sense of war,
But lacks the wit to save him in the game
He must play now to win. Put him aside;
He'll crawl into his closet, shape new schemes
Of kingdoms past the sea.

ELIZ. Now this is done,
His wounds will smart and heal; they will not spur
To further deeds. The rest are little men;
Numbed by their hurts they will forget their swords;
At worst they'll clamour. So we shall have peace.
Now, good contriver, bring John Spencer here
If he be Lazarus with all his sores,
For we needs heal him of the wound we gave,—
And after that a messenger to France
To say we ask he send an embassy
To bear hence word of counsel. Say that we
Would welcome Biron if he be the choice,

For he would greet us with dear memories
Of one we knew together, and we him
With some hard lessons that may profit bear.
You know how like they were.

CECIL. Ay, very like.

ELIZ. I would not see his brother die as he,
Though Biron 's nought to us save as he 's like
To him we slew.

CECIL. Nay, my Queen.

ELIZ. Ay, Cecil,
This kingdom slew him, for it took a realm
To bear his might to earth. But from our hands
We have to wash his blood as best we may,
For see, it stains them all. Look thou on mine:
All I may do till death will leave them stained
In purple from his heart. Look on thine own:
The headsman's in his work were not so red.
We slew in justice; yet the mark is there,
For hate went with the stroke. Bring Biron here:
He 's on the fatal way; he shall it see. —
But first our mayor; that 's a nearer quest.

End of Act First.

ACT SECOND

SCENE I

WINDSOR.

ELIZABETH, *looking from window.*

ELIZABETH.

HERE have I seen my father silent look
Down this fair way of Thames as though he went
In thought upon a progress through his realm.
And I, a little child, then marvelled long,
What led his eager soul thus far away
To the unseen, and why when he came back
His weary eyes were dimmed. Age stealeth much,
Yet doth the hoary thief give us return
When he thus leads us where our fathers stood,
Making us to inhabit their dear souls
And have their days our own.

Enter Usher.

USHER. Your majesty,
Sir Francis Bacon, whom you bade attend,
Awaiteth on your pleasure.

ELIZ. Bid him here. —
He too is hungry, yet with nobler greeds
Than all the avid rest. From him I 'll have
What wisdom 's here below.

Enter BACON.

Welcome, good friend;
You are our counselor in matters strange
That lie beyond the ken of other wits,
Keen though they be. — We who have been so near
To England's glorious fields, now journey on
Into the realm where we must bide alway,
Forgetting and forgot. We 'd set this house
Of our own soul in order, clear our eyes
For faithful seeing in the growing dark.
Thy noble art is wisdom: help us know —
If 't is to mortal given — what is death.

BACON. My Queen, 't is as you 've said, a journey on;
Yet 't is no going new, but that which brought
To us the birthlight: ay, the very same
That sent this sphere a-whirling through the void
With all its noble burthen; bade all stars
To tread brave ways from nothingness to night
In endless going back unto their God,
Who sent them forth as ships upon His seas
To harvest joy.

ELIZ. Ay, they too go to nought!
What doth it profit us that stars must die?
That does but seal the compact with grim death
And make his night the realm.
BACON. We name it night
When from our sky the quickening sun goes on
To wake the unseen fields beyond the seas.
We know the Lord doth bid His light live on
And darkness be but shadow of His day.
Were we enlarged from our poor cells of earth,
The dark, that 's half our life and all our fear,
Would be no more.
ELIZ. Yea, that is sovereign truth,
Sent ringing from His throne. His subject's mind
Doth take so much of blessing; yet it longs
For that which may give other fairer yet
In trust that our dear atomies may live.
Ay, it is noble that the realm sweeps on
In all completeness to far destiny,
But 't is scant comfort if its iron wheels
Roll on our dust insensate. — Know, my seer,
How all this life of earth, from grass to men,
Lifts for a day to sun and then falls down
As raindrop in the realm from whence it came,
Lost in the fearful deep. So dust to dust
Returneth endlessly again to spring

Until this handful that we call ourselves
Hath been the habitation of a host
Past reckoning; thus we but tenants are
Of an old hostel where all comers have
Fair welcome and a bidding to fare on,
So soon their hearts are warmed. The room is scant,
And all have but scant warming when the host
Doth thrust them out. Ay, and with contumely
If they would bide o'er long.

BACON. While we there halt,
Waiting the word of march, let us look back
And see behind us on the endless way
Like hostels infinite, with shelter good,
That gave forgotten welcome and command
Our souls should ceaseless on.

ELIZ. Oh, that wings thought,
But parts us from our footing on firm earth
Where we need stand.

BACON. Yea, if we would behold
The everlasting in this infinite,
We need part from the world, take to the wings
Of our discerning souls, — members as true
As those that tread its fields, — and on those wings
Sweep the wide realms of time and earth and sky.
So may we part us from this commonplace

Of deeds that cramp us in our dust-bound life,
And make us judgment free.

ELIZ. That 's dizzying.

BACON. 'T is but the custom ; for the eagle looks
From heights that dwarf the mightiest steep of shore, —
Whence men start back in terror, — fearless down. —
Soar up into the spaces and look far :
What is that tiny sphere there in the realm,
That atom in the all ? It is thine earth
With all its precious freightage. Yea, how small
Mid these profounds and orbs all numberless,
A tiny bark upon a vergeless sea.
Yet it sweeps on in safety of its God. —
You 've seen great barks go o'er the archèd main
Until they vanished past the horizon,
Yet never doubted that their helmsmen seek
To bring them sure to haven. Can you doubt
That He, the master of celestial ships,
Hath purpose in their faring and doth send
Their cargoes safe to home ?

ELIZ. Ay, if the Lord
Were, like ourselves, a tradesman in His soul
And we His precious store. — Strange argument
That makes the Everlasting count His wares.

BACON. And yet the other makes Him spend-
thrift fool, —
Inventor merciless of perfect things,
Who rends them when they 're made; who loves
but dust,
And shapes it to perfection but to hurl
All back to dust again. We have the choice,
From out the possible the God we will:
The demon of the savage who doth rage
In manner of his vassal, or the Lord
Our fathers found and showed us, — God of truth
Firm knit to His creations, pledged to them
Because they are His own, because they hold
In their own hearts the warrant of His faith
In share of His own soul.

ELIZ. Yea, that goes far
And seems to near the haven, yet there lies
Upon that shore a mist that blinds my sight;
Seest thou it clear?

BACON. It is not to be seen,
But shown unto our souls by echoes faint
And by far dawnings.

ELIZ. Oh, I asked for proof:
You bring it not, yet something strangely good
Cometh from out your wisdom. As in sun
The mists impalpable rise from the sea,

Building the freighted clouds that quickening rain
Send to the parchèd earth. To the ages' drought
That is in me these deeps have sent their dew.
This helpeth hunger so we may not starve,
But leaves us all unfilled.

BACON. To be a soul
Is to be starving, — howe'er fed by life,
Ever to be unfilled. For 't is a void
Shaped to contain the all; if satiate
It would know death. This clamour for the days
We cannot see is like the cry of child
For milk of mother, or its cry for light
When frightened by the dark. And all this realm
With endless harmonies is cradle song
To lull our fears and bid us know that God
Hath His strong arms around our infancy.

ELIZ. I would that wisdom were the cradle song
When we are lulled into our age's sleep;
So might our eyes unfearing look their last
Upon our dear own world and dream the next
Into fair morning. Yet it is sore hard
To go and be forgotten where we 've been
So well remembered. We would seek the book
Where men are written in and see these words,
'Here passed a lover, stern, mayhap, but true

To folk and realm and duty; handed on
Her trust unblemished when she went the way,'
Writ so all men should read.

BACON. Yea, that is writ
So all must read.

ELIZ. Nay, nay, that ugly page
Hath blood upon it so that men to come
Will there read shame. It needs to be rewrit
By master's hand, set forth so there shall live
The woman who must die, who if she might
Would choose the utter dreadful death to hold
Love of her realm won with her dear heart's blood
And like to fade away. Save us this ill;
The rest we 'll chance.

BACON. There is a player here,
Near by your court, who hath such mastery
That he can speak kings' shadows into shapes
Wondrous substantial; so a vulgar knave
Bred in a playhouse, putting on their crowns,
Takes to his common soul their kingliness.
This wizard art is seldom, and it comes
We know not whence nor how. Whether the great
Of all earth's realms and ages find in him
Way back to us, or he himself is king
Who came not to his empire and doth go

As errant sovereign, herald of all thrones,
Whose vanished masters would their message send
Back to their people's hearts.

ELIZ. Whence is this man?

BACON. Up from the herd. But when such master steps
Upon the stage we ask not whence, for he
Brings the forever with him.

ELIZ. Know ye him?

BACON. Ay, as the many know him, and know not
More than his goodly shape and gentle way,
The flash of word and eye that lights his deep.
Yet there 's a wall about him seen alone
By those who search the mysteries of men
And know what worlds may be within them hid.

ELIZ. I 'll speak with him. — Yea, 't is a wondrous realm
Where thus a sovereign by my throne hath dwelt
In silent majesty; I would bide still
Another life to see what dwelleth here. —
Bring him to me this eve to crown the help
You 've sent to me.

BACON. My Queen, it was your right.

ELIZ. Nay, nay, no queening. Think you I 've not known

That king and sage have not possessed this hour,
But fellow mortals questioning the Lord.
Farewell, and know it has been yours to lift
Some darkness from mine eyes.

End of Scene.

SCENE II

CHAMBER OF QUEEN.

ELIZABETH, BACON, *and Player.*

BACON. Here is the master of our stage, who brings
The actors of all time to deck his own.
My liege needs not his name.

ELIZABETH. No more than he
Doth need our welcome. He hath known it well
In greeting to himself through many shapes
Sent o'er the space that parts his airy world
From ours of earth. [*To Player.*] Yet welcome once again,
For we would speak you near: of puppet shows
Where mannikins may mimic deeds of men,
Pulled by the clever strings of mountebanks
On dirty boards; and of the fairer place
Where those poor dolls are lifted when they die, —

So please ye poets, — there to play the parts
Their sore hearts ached to play the while they danced
Their sorry round.

PLAYER. My Queen, you nobly greet
Your servant with the sense of his dear hope
And stay his purposes : 't is sovereign help.
But we poor players find that in our best
We get but shadows of our fancied folk,
Who had their substance from beholding eyes
And souls that saw their greatness in the life.

ELIZ. Nay, master, it is thine to set us clear
In eyes that see when ours shall look no more
On earth's dear things. Thou hast the sovereign cure
For death's worst ill. For thou hast made my sire
Stand 'fore us in his strength, — brave as the sea
And, though as ruthless, still the mighty sea
Of mastering passions such as maketh man
Fit for vast deeds of noble sovereignty
That shape a realm. — Yea, happy is the time
That nurtures men to send its story on
True in the balanced truth of poesy,
Where gold and dross are parted, and the gold
Wrought in its mint to perfect currency
For commerce of high souls. — So may we die,

Knowing death's hand leads not into the dark,
But to unending day with our own folk
In this belovèd light. — The sculptors seek
To give us semblance in the lifeless stone;
Ye bid ourselves pass on, more truly on
Than child from mother, through the womb of soul.

PLAYER. My Queen, were you our hearer, that we 'd do,
And count all time and men our audience
For perfect understanding of the part.
But they who wait us cannot see the play
That lives in splendour by them, for they feel
The soul that is beside them like their own, —
Fouled with the fellow earth they know too well;
So we must seek the shadow land to find
Brave empured names of other time and realm
To bear the garb we fashion from the web
Our common lives here weave. Ay, the far orbs
Are as the earth, mere clods; yet they are stars
For they are far: but had we dwelt in them,
Trod in their mire, and bitten of their dust,
We should not see their glory; they would be
Mere rushlights in our eyes.

ELIZ. [*to* BACON]. Hear that, my sage,

What say you here of stars that be mere clods
Save that they 're far ?

BACON. My liege, so it may be:
All matter 's cognate, as the bits that fall
From out the heavens tell us. I have seen
In them the very substance of this earth
Of divers shapes. I 'll prove you this
With samples an you will.

ELIZ. Go to, my sage,
The poet's wisdom 's fitter for my ken;
For it doth spare the proof, asks but the ay
From soul that knew before instruction came,
And finds the answer ancient, good, and true,
As I do this, so aptly left half said
In parable from sky. — [*To Player.*] My man, my man,
Thou art a mighty one who thus can slay
Thy sovereign's dearest hope with thy keen stroke,
Yet leave thyself the dearer to her heart.
Here in this dark she counts her rosary, —
Each bead a star that once was clod of earth,
Now far and shining. So she knows it true,
That we must be the dust to wait the call
Of God or Singer to the life beyond.
Grace for thy lesson.

PLAYER. Hear me still, my Queen:

Your servant had not dared to set his thought
Thus 'gainst your longing, — no, not in the sky
Where you alone would read it, — were it not
He knew it safe within your mighty soul
To leave no sorrow. You have compassed time
And shaped his deeds to be your very own.
Leave all unto that master; he 's your scribe
To write your story on the earth he tends.
We of this age are children of your house;
To you our mother we can give but love;
Song is not fit, however well we sing,
To do our service. Happy they whose part
'T will be to shape in fancy what she was
Who gave her folk their glory. Yet their joy
Will be the empty vessel we now hold
Brim filled with glorious wine.

ELIZ. That is fair homage, — yea, I know its gauge, —
Yet not so fit as when thou hurled'st me truth,
Forgetting else because thine art is true
And goes straight to its end. Oh, I am poor
For loss of a fair blossom that the share
Of thy rude plough hath sent into its grave.
Yet though the earth be raw, from it will spring
A better for the turning. Now farewell,
Until we send for thee; when be thou here,

For something comes to pass we 'd have thee see,
A bit of doing that mayhap will shape
To a fair comedy.

[*Exit Player.* ELIZABETH *is long silent.*

BACON. I brought him for your comfort; he hath left
Sorrow behind him. He 's not shaped to serve
A sovereign's need.

ELIZ. Nay, man, I have known kings
And studied what 't was graced their sovereignty
To match me with them; yet none else save he
Hath sent mine eyes aloft to find his crown
Set 'gainst the sky. What said he in that hour?
Would it were written, for I never knew
Speech echo fairer in dear memory,
As trumpet notes that leap from crag to crag
And stir night's spaces as they onward fly
With shout of valour.

BACON. Yea, I 've noted well
That those who speak with him stay not on earth,
But circle far above; or else they go
To the deep seas, or to yet nether realm.

ELIZ. This land of mine is garden fit to till.
Would I were master of its years to come
To see the harvest where I know but seed:
You too have planted and have felt the ache

Of those who hunger for the fruit, yet know
They 'll never look upon the laden tree. —
Ay, he brought sorrow, yet it is the pain
That greatens soul and changes clods to stars
Lessening death's baseness. Could we but bide here
In such vast spaces we might wait for him
E'en as we would, in sovereign dignity
As King doth wait a King.

Enter Chamberlain.

What brings you here?

CHAMBERLAIN. My liege, the morrow ye are bid attend
As gossip for Sir Harry Compton's son.
He says you promised him this royal grace.

ELIZ. Yea, 't is a pretty finish of our play.
Doth Sir John come?

CHAMB. He willing comes
In wonder at your call.

ELIZ. Tell him we wait
To have his service in a happy deed
We 've planned to light our day.

End of Scene.

SCENE III

AUDIENCE ROOM AT WHITEHALL.

ELIZABETH.

Enter Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN. He waits, my Queen, whom
you bade hasten here
With a proud patience that befits a king
More than your servant player.

ELIZABETH. Bid him in
And bow ye low before him, for he comes
To welcome greeting. He 's a courtier
By a far throne and his high aspect hath,
To those who know, true touch of kingliness.
Your eyes are keen, my man. Haste! bid him in.

Enter Player, who kneels to kiss QUEEN'S *hand.*

Ah, master, once more welcome to my eyes
As sun would be to them in this dull day
That hath forgot its office.

PLAYER. Nay, my Queen,
'T is fairest office of yon sky to fend
Betimes from us the far-off lights that we
May know and love the nearer.

ELIZ. Oh my friend,
We just now named you courtier and you prove

Our judgment true. Yea, but you shape it well;
The dearest homage goeth through the heart
To stay in understanding.

PLAYER. My liege hath
A soul that quicks her servants to her mind,
They do no more than send her back the light
After the manner of the moon to sun.

ELIZ. So may it once have been, but now this sun
Hath changed its part and hungers for the light
It had erstwhile to give. Oh master, thou know'st well
How deep the darkness that doth wrap us in
When eyes grow dim and in our memories
We seek the vanished light.

PLAYER. That light doth burn
In sky that changes not, though all the orbs
Roll on to endless night. In memory
Is garnered all that suns may win from fields
Safe folded from the fates that claim all else
For their scant harvest in the empty straw.
They do but glean where trod that reaper's feet
The waste he scorned.

ELIZ. It is thy clever wit
To gloze the evils of the dark with day.
Thy fancy paints with moonbeams. But I know

What dawn and noon and eve can give a king,
Or to his meanest, when dear life doth lend
Youth to the winning. [*Pointing to distance.*] See
you there away
Far down yon sombre valley where this noon
Scarce parts it from the night. Ah, how I loved
To go it o'er and scent the earth that turned
Upon the ploughs, or see the corn that came
In song enrichèd harvests that went home
When summer's tide was o'er. And on and on
A hundred vales gave welcome to the way
Of England's Queen. Yea, there have sovereigns
been
With wider realms to sway, but never one
Who dearer held his empire in his heart
Or had his folk so near.

PLAYER. Or who was held
So by the hearts of men in perfect trust
For all the sovereign's part.

ELIZ. That was, that was,
When winters were but dawnings of the spring
And sorest need mask of prosperity.
Then came the waning to the sorry eve
When faces that in youth had looked on her
In glad expectancy were turned away
Or wore their smiles for seeming, when the youths

She drew near to her childless breast waxed men
To rend her heart in hunger for her realm
And meet the traitor's fate.

PLAYER. One such, no more,
And he the noblest traitor of all time,
Whose fault was sovereign, for he was a king
To brook no mastery save from his God;
Who bore with him to well-deservèd block
The splendour that was his because he grew
Where your eyes lit men's souls.

ELIZ. Ah, then you know.
Thank God my prophet knows; but this hard folk,
Mine in their father's time, are mine no more
Save by sheer might. Their love went forth with him,
And we are in stark winter where the days
Ebb down to darkness and there comes no spring
With its remounting hope.

PLAYER. 'T is the hard fate
Of those who bless a realm with lengthened rule:
They take for their reward the mortal's pay
In sight of men who speed them on to goals
They set but never win. We of the throng
Catch light of battle in the eyes of sons
Who haste away uncaring, so they come
Timely to deeds in which we have no share.

Your sorrow passes ours, for all this realm
Is of your travail, nurtured by your care.
You see the great procession pass afar
Until its banners sink behind the hills,
Yet you are with them; all their might is yours,
The light that 's in their eyes you gave to them.
So march a people onward when their kings
Show the appointed way.

ELIZ. Thine is the art,
The sacred art that doth the soul assoil
In the vast spaces, serene, cold, and pure
Where all our hungers still and fade away.—
The man within thee knows we cannot dwell
In that empyrean; we must back to earth
And take again its dear clods to our hearts
And find our peace with them.

PLAYER. My Queen, we must
Keep feet on earth, however high we lift
Our eyes above its hills. It is our part
To send our souls into that spacious realm
And let them wait us there.

ELIZ. Nay, my player,
Thou canst not set this stage of earth to fit
That fair philosophy. Here we must bide
And leave the Lord to sift our good from ill.

Enter Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN. Your majesty, Sir John attends you long;
He chafes of waiting. He is on my heels.

Enter SIR JOHN.

ELIZ. How now, my clothyard knight, you 're timely here.
We do not have to bide when you are bid;
You have a sovereign's promptness.

SIR JOHN. Ay, my liege,
Your sceptre should be gauged as is my own
To measure true and give his fitting share
To each who comes. Thus might your courtiers
Catch your good Tudor sense of shopman's ways.

ELIZ. Ho, my hard friend, hap you 've a better gauge
Upon your yardstick than upon your tongue.
Yet will we count it courtesy, for you
Share this wide realm with us and have the right
To pinch our sovereign ears.

SIR JOHN. Nay, my good liege,
I am your servant and my lordship holds
To certain shops and ships, to be your own.
You know I have no heir, nor kith nor kin,
So when John Spencer 's dust, they are his Queen's
Wherewith to deck her fancy.

ELIZ. Ah, Sir John,

Your mortal house is builded on a rock,
'T will fall not in our time. We know you have
A buxom wedded daughter; she 'll send sons
To show your ships to reaches of far seas
Your keels have never stirred. They 'll give you youth
When else this life were old.

SIR JOHN. I had a lass,
But she died from my house a year agone.
You saw her funeral although it went
Not by the lych gate's way.

ELIZ. Shame on you, man,
'T was a brave wedding.

SIR JOHN. Shame on my liege, for she
Hath parted father from his only child
To please an idle knave.

ELIZ. We trusted rage
To blow itself away and leave our sky
Clear for new morning. Thus it is with men
Save one who hath so vaunted on his will
He 'll not forgive his God who made his child
Bow 'fore another master. — Pray, good friend,
Take lesson of your eyes and see that spleen
Is but a miser of mere emptiness
Whose coffers never hold of merchant's gain
Won in fair barter.

SIR JOHN. Yea, she 's dead, she 's dead,
And till our graves are opened she shall lie
Where ye have graved her.

ELIZ. Let 's have truce to that.
Your Queen hath bid you here for better deed
Than fuming with her over yesterdays;
To-day we share an office of God's realm.
We are to be the sponsors of a babe
That shall be man when men know us no more.
So we in childless age may link our lives
With youth that mounts to hope. Share this with me,
Token of days when with your soul and ships
You stayed our England well.

SIR JOHN. Ay, that I will,
For, though she was my foe in that hard deed,
My Queen is yet my liege.

ELIZ. They wait us long,
For we have made long prelude to this play.
Now quick to church.

SIR JOHN. Whose is this child, my Queen?

ELIZ. Of man and woman; poor in all save hope,
But passing rich in that. We 'll find anon
What name it is to bear. What 's in a name?
Our task concerns God's realm. So let us on.

[*Exeunt to chapel.*

End of Scene.

SCENE IV

CHAPEL. SERVICE OF BAPTISM.

Priest and Attendants. Mother veiled, Father in shadow.

Enter QUEEN *and* SIR JOHN SPENCER *with Player.*

PRIEST. And ye who take this charge, will ye now give
Your pledge to God this child born in our faith,
Though motherless, it have a mother's care,
And never lack a father's hand to stay
So long ye bide on earth?

SIR JOHN. Ay, that I do
Most willingly, for I have none on earth
To claim the right of child, and this shall be
Near to me all my days.

ELIZABETH. We pledge with him
And know our surety good in that true knight
Who giveth heart with word; now 'fore the Lord
We 'll name the boy John Spencer.

[*Priest holds babe to* SIR JOHN.

ELIZ. [*to* SIR JOHN]. Take him, Sir John;
Ne'er came to sire a fairer hope in son
Than this shall be to you.

SIR JOHN [*taking child*]. 'T is a brave boy,

And in his eyes I see a light that 's gone
Out of my own for aye.

ELIZ. Nay, 't is come back;
Thy face is as we knew it in thy youth
When here thou cam'st to wed thy bride so fair;
Self-same as when unto this font thou brought'st
A girl to take God's welcome, — face of man
Who knew the glory of undying love
But since has worn the ugly mask of hate.
Tread that foul semblance 'neath thy feet and stay
The man God made to bear His light in eyes
Until He bade him hence —

SIR JOHN. Yea, it is like —
So strangely like. It slays a score of years
Since here I brought another new-born child,
Alas! now dead. [*To* QUEEN.] How is it that this babe
With puny hands tugs my old heart to him?
Whose child is it, my Queen?

ELIZ. This thou wouldst know?

SIR JOHN. Ay, there is need of traffic, for I 've said
This lad shall be mine own.

ELIZ. [*signing to Mother*]. This is God's time.

[*Mother comes to* SIR JOHN *and kneels before him.*

SIR JOHN. My child, my child!

ELIZ. Farewell, Sir John, your soul and ships have found
The fitting heir. [*To Player.*] Come, master, it is done;
This comedy is ended.

PLAYER. Noble Queen,
The play is but begun; like all you set
Upon this everlasting stage, it will go on
Forever trooping down the ways of time,
For it shall have for player every man
Who does his part in largeness.

End of Scene.

SCENE V

GARDEN OF WHITEHALL PALACE.

ELIZABETH *and Court.*

ELIZABETH [*to Lady in Waiting*]. Where is my jester? 'Hap he 'll have some quirks
To stir our wits. He promised yesterday
That if this dull earth held it he 'd find sport
To light a London noon. Send forth for him;
Bid him to leave his wisdom, bring his wit;
To come as cap and bells, and not to preach
As he 's oft mind to do.

LADY IN WAITING [*to Servant*]. Go, seek her Clod,
And if he 'scape thee, seek for his old dog
And he will be near by.
ELIZ. [*to Lady*]. 'T is evil sign
When fools turn wise and wise men make them fools
As mine seem striving to. We 'll mend their ways
Or change their trades to fit them.
LADY. Has my Queen
Seen how her jester hath shrunk to his ghost?
With no more room for breath.
ELIZ. Nay, he 's himself,
None merrier save when he 'd play the priest
Or else the counselor.
LADY. Yea, but he 's old —
ELIZ. 'Sdeath! Merry Clod is old? He came to us
A while ago; ay, by Westminster's gate
As we went to our crowning. He was then,
What he was yesterday, of jesters king,
The dearest hump that e'er brought sovereign help
For sovereign's ills. Why comes he not? 'T is strange:
He 's wonted to our service and bides near
To heed our call. Ay, he is faithful Clod.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. My Queen, your Clod is gone; we found him dead
Upon his pallet with his cur held fast
Between his withered arms.
ELIZ. Alas! dear Clod,
Now all is well with thee.
SERVANT. Wouldst see, my Queen?
He lieth straight. It is a miracle;
His hump hath gone.
ELIZ. Nay, we 'll not see:
That wonder 's not for world of fellow Clods,
But for another. Grave him with true men,
For in his misshape dwelt a nobleman. —
[*To* CECIL.] Cecil, I must away. I am o'ercome
By mastering death where death seems mortal shame.
We will to Hatfield, where the churchyard blooms
Even in winter, when the weary come
Seeking the mother's arms.
CECIL. My Queen, it stays
Ever thine own, and waiting with its love
Unagèd by long years.

End of Act Second.

ACT THIRD

SCENE I

GATE OF HATFIELD HOUSE. *Early Morning.*

Country Folk awaiting ELIZABETH.

VILLAGE YOUTH.

EE! See! Beyond the trees her banner waves
Its red above the green. Her trumpets shout
To send the ravens croaking and the owls
Swift scuttling from their holes. Now for the dance,
That she may know us merry as we be
At her home faring.

[*Villagers place themselves for the dance.*

DAME FIELDING. Oh, I never thought
To see her more until she came to lie
Beside her Ashley, where she would find rest
When all her work was done.

FIELDING. Nay, dame, be still;
Leave croaking to yon ravens. She comes here

For frolic with her people. Her hard years
We 'll help her to forget for memory
Of how she 's aged for us.

[*Youths and Maidens dance to pipe.*

Pipe and Voice.

Welcome, welcome, Hatfield's Queen,
Welcome here; we dance and sing
And for thee our roses fling.
Take our hearts and love, dear Queen;
Thine are all our larks and daisies,
Thine our dance that in its mazes
Weaveth love of all that 's been
Waiting for thee in thy bowers,
Waiting in our corn and flowers,
For home faring of our Queen.

Enter ELIZABETH *on a palfrey, with Attendants.*

ELIZ. [*to Player*]. Good player, that is here
which seemed so far,
Heart lifting welcome I so long have dreamed;
Yea, 't is good harvest home.

PLAYER. Mistress, 't is May:
This is the sower's song; we 've fared afar
Beyond the further tropic where the sun
Brings springtime when he slants adown our sky.
Give soul to it; there 's youth in this good cup
That loving youth doth press to age's lips.

ELIZ. Ay, that I will; my life, my folk are back,
And every pulse within me beats that dance.
I cannot stay here caged; let me afoot
That I may tread with them this changeless sod
And feel its spring of youth. [ELIZABETH *alights.*

Youths and Maidens.

Mistress, this is May-time measure,
Lost the while we lone have been.
Come ye here and heap our pleasure;
Come, dear mistress, be our Queen.

[*They draw* ELIZABETH *to dance.*

Now we have our May-day measure,
Heyday frolic with our Queen,
Now our mistress crowns our pleasure
As we crown her Hatfield's Queen.

[*A lass places crown of flowers on* ELIZABETH'S *head;* ELIZABETH *takes her hand.*

ELIZ. My lass, there is a light in thy fair eyes
That shone into my heart in days of old;
Thou hast the right to welcome with a crown
And 'neath it bid me be your Hatfield's queen:
Thou art Kate's daughter, — yea, her very self:
Dear lass, I 'm now at home.

DAME F. [*to* FIELDING]. Kate Ashley's lass!
She was her grandame.
FIELDING. Hush, dame, hush! She 'll hear.
The lass hath mercy. Faith, the grannie had
Like face in her fair time.
LASS. Mistress, we be
The children of thy house, and would be so
That all stay as of yore to light thine eyes
When they look on us.
ELIZ. Ye are good to me
To keep your faces changeless as these walls
And hearts as their foundations.
[*To Youth.*] Ah, dear John,
I thought thee hid beneath yon yew-tree's shade;
Art thou a sturdy shadow from his grave
Sent here to lift an age?
JOHN. Nay, Hatfield's queen,
I am thy John and shall be when I lie
Beside my gaffer's bones.
FIELDING [*aside*]. The smart fool's tongue
Will make our task the harder.
ELIZ. Thy gaffer, lad,
Was gone before I came; but thy good sire
Was my dear giant when I was a child.
I well remember how he seemed to me

Firm set as yonder tower. All my days
When stout men stood before me I've harked back
To him as measure of the shape of men
Who rule our England's fields. Betimes I've felt,
When sore, sore weary, his stout arms uplift
The child that bides in Age's heart alway,
And longs for sparing strength; then I have dreamed
My head lay on his shoulder while he strode
At eve across yon fields to bear me home
When I had wandered far. — How all comes back, —
Those days when first I knew the might of man,
The glory of his strength, his simple faith
Won from this honest earth. — Yea, happy child,
So orphaned, still to find a father's arms
And waiting mother's breast mid simple folk
By this foul world unsoiled. [*To* JOHN.] Stay, lad, with me:
The Lord is good to send thee to mine eyes;
Thy Queen hath use for thee.

JOHN. Yea, Hatfield's queen,

Thy John shall faithful serve thee; in this realm
He knows no other liege.

ELIZ. Not England's Queen?

JOHN. Nay, Hatfield's we all serve; the other is
A traitor to our own, who keeps her caged
Far from her folk.

ELIZ. Ho, rebel, so thy sire
In ruder phrase would scorn his England's lord
And scoff her bidding when she 'd have him go
Elsewhere to serve. She would have had him hanged,
As she 'd hang thee, but that she too hath hung
'Twixt faith to rival realms. [*To People.*] Lead on, dear folk,
Yon gate waits with its welcome and within
Is else that 's dear.

Pipe and Voice.

Mistress, Hatfield's gate 's been darkened
Since that weary yesterday
When its darling message hearkened
That did bid her hie away.

Now the sun is bright upon it,
Now its gillies bloom again,
For her wandering feet have won it;
Hatfield hath its day again.

Welcome waiteth open hearted
'Neath our roof as 'neath our sky:
We are joined who were long parted;
We'll be happy till we die. [*They go within.*

End of Scene.

SCENE II

HALL AT HATFIELD HOUSE.

ELIZABETH *and Train, Keeper of Hatfield.*

KEEPER. Our Hatfield's mistress hath brought glorious morn
To light its hearts and fields.

ELIZABETH. Yea, e'en the night,
Hovering like mother bird upon this realm,
Doth hatch a noble brood. It sent to me
God's spacious silence where the soul may build
The temples of its dreams to love and faith
And therein kneel in peace. It sent me day
As day should come, with carolling of lark
And heart that answers hail. I 'm young again, —
Save for these weighted limbs and watery eyes,
The child who roamed these fields and looked away
With wonder of beyonds. Now as of old
I hunger for the happiness to come
In merry hours betwixt the morn and eve:

They 'll vie to give me joy, and I 'll be queen
Of their fair tourney.

KEEPER. Mistress, we 'd fain bring
The store we 've garnered all these fruitful years
From dear love put to faithful usury,
But that would break the back of stoutest hours
And cumber thee with gold. So we will show
Ensample of thy treasures that may tell
If we have hid our talents. See afar,
[*Pointing from window.*
How comes the tribute of this morning hour,
Trooping unto thy gate.

ELIZ. [*looking away*]. Yea, here it comes,
A glorious stream from out my hills and dales
Such as doth flow o'er golden sands of heaven
Wherein the agèd lave their years away
For their eternal youth. Set wide the gate
As that which guards my heart doth open far
Upon its rusty hinges to let in
God's blessed tide.

Enter Procession of Children, who dance to pipe and sing.

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, now 't is merry morning,
Lark hath sung the sun to sky;
Now he brings day to thy chamber:
Mistress, let us with him hie.

To the dales where Daffies blossom,
To the hills for violets.
All our aprons shall be laden
Ere the sun at even sets.

Then we'll weave thee in the gloaming
Nightcap of dark poppy flowers,
So thou'lt sleep well till the morning
Send again its happy hours.

ELIZ. [*gathering Children to her*]. Yea, little ones,
and I will show you where
The lark doth hatch her chicks and teach them how
To pipe the sun up o'er the eastern hill,
And you shall cage me one so I may have
The merry trumpeter to hail me day
Whenever it be dark.

CHILD. But, mistress, here there be
Of larks a plenty, and we 've always day
When night is done.

ELIZ. Yea, darling, so we have
In merry Hatfield ; but far, far away
In sorry places, there is never one
To wake the morning.

CHILD. Mistress, dwell folk there ?

ELIZ. Yea, child, sad, weary folk.

CHILD. Oh bid them here,

And we will take them Maying in the morn
And teach them to be glad.

ELIZ. Dear, one will go
A-Maying with thee who would never back
Into the larkless land.

Enter Procession of Lads and Lassies bearing Flowers.

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, here we bring thee blossoms
Plucked from every hill and dale,
Sample of the hosts who've faded,
Hosts that sprung to give thee hail.

Phloxes from thy far-up meadows,
Primroses from by thy spring,
Lilies pale from yew-trees' shadow,
Greet thee in our offering.

Mistress, take with these the welcome
Of the many who have died
Lacking all for all their glory,
For they bloomed not by thy side.

ELIZ. Yea, singer, to my heart; for heart's good store
In life's best harvest of its fadeless blooms. —
My children, let me change this gift with tale
Of how in eld a princess, a poor girl,

Was prisoned in hard walls with but one gate,
That led to death. Yea, but there came to her
A tiny lass with a wee blanchèd flower
And love to give it might. Then fell those walls
And forth the princess hied, our England's Queen,
For her heart woke to love unknown before,
A love that mocketh gaols.— Full long she reigned,
And in her weary age it did befall
She stood again all hapless 'fore that gate.
Once more there comes the light of God's dear eyes
Out of His blossoms, and once more those walls
Fall into dust.

LAD. Mistress, where is that gaol?
The morrow we'll be men, and we will slay
Those sorry knaves who cage our princesses
And set them 'fore such gates.

ELIZ. Oh lads, dear lads,
They be great giants who do us these wrongs;
Wax stout of limb and soul if ye would hew
With good swords to their hearts.

LAD. Ay, that we will.

ELIZ. Yea, that ye will: I see it in your eyes.
Ye 'll slay those gaolers and break down those walls
Where innocence is caged. I trust ye well. —

Song and Pipe.

Now the harvest shows its treasures,
Telling how our mistress' fields
Know the round from plough to sickle
And the fatness good earth yields.

Corn a plenty, cattle lowing
From the dale and from the hill,
Sheep that speckle all her pastures
As the stars the heaven fill.

How the spinsters' songs are whirring,
How the matron swings the loom,
So the shuttle beats the measure
While the great wheel lends its boom,

Beating to the song that ever
Ringeth 'neath our happy sky,
Where doth seed, in every furrow,
Joy to spring, though sower die.

Enter Farmers and Wives, bringing corn and cloth.

FARMER GILES. Mistress, here is corn from thy
home field
That yieldeth hundred fold.
ELIZ. Yea, that is good,
Fair scripture measure. Let no villain tares
Creep in to scant that yielding.

GILES. We care well
And reckon every grain as more than gold,
For it is precious seed.
ELIZ. Not for the mill?
GILES. Nay, for new sowing in old fields that wait
To give great harvests where they 'd else be scant,
However deep we till.
ELIZ. Give me of it [*Taking seed.*
And I will string a necklace of the grains
For this dear memory. How came ye by this corn?
The good Lord seldom sendeth such gifts here
To prayerful need.
GILES. Long gone a gentle child,
With mind to share our sowing, dibbled in
Some chosen lusty seed that topped best ears
And weighed them nodding down. She cared for them
With little hands that had the might of kings
In shaping to their will. When our sires came
To set their sickles, they found wonder there;
They named it 'Princess corn,' so it is told
In songs at harvest home.
ELIZ. Dear man, dear man,
Thou giv'st me back the best of all my days,

And with it boon to bless the noblest crown
In well remembered help. — Welcome, my folk,
Who know the sweetness of these fields with me,
And send them wholesome to your children on.
We have been fellow sowers of our realm;
God grant us like good harvest for our toil.
Pray this for me.

Old People draw near with immortelles and yew branches in their hands.

Voice and Pipe.

Now the weary, heavy-laden,
With their treasures, come to thee;
They have bided long, awaiting
Time to show they faithful be.

Winter's set its frosts upon them,
Summer's toil hath bowed them sore,
And their hands bear thee but little,
For their harvest days are o'er.

Yet, dear mistress, they bear treasures
That our blooms and corn outvie:
In their hearts they bring thee jewels
Gathered from the earth and sky, —

Love they 've garnered by our chimneys,
Valour won on reddened earth,
Trust from God's face in the heavens,
Wondrous things from death and birth.

ELIZ. [*to Keeper*]. I 'll go to them, for they have come to me
Across long lifetime's reaches toiling on. —
[*To People*]. Dear comrades, well we knew this world together
As happy children knew it, — knew it not
Save from each other's eyes. We 've trod our ways
Nigh one to other, though to sight denied,
Until by grace of God our hearts touch here
At His appointed place beside our graves.
Your England's Queen, though far, doth send to ye
This message from her weary, troubled soul
With love and greeting: all her days she 's known
Your staying might to help her in her need,
On far-off seas, 'neath England's roof, in heart
Wrung by the deeds the Lord hath bade her do
In fealty to your law. Her sorest woe
Hath lightened when she dreamed she went with ye
Beside your faithful ploughs, your laden wains,

Bringing great harvests home. She 'll share your joys,
Have part in all your sorrows, to the end
In God's great silence and the hope beyond.

OLD WOMAN. Dear mistress, we thy lovers of this land
Have had thee in our hearts since that far time
When thou wert of our days. We bring to thee
Of rosemary that 's sweet in winters long,
Of thyme that wins its fragrance when 't is dead,
These everlastings that hold fast their blooms
Till dear spring comes again, and eke this yew
That bideth ever green.

ELIZ. Dear folk, dear folk,
Thank God your true hearts tell ye what my tongue
Must leave untold lest heart of mine should break, —
What passeth thanks. It stayeth in my soul.
His mercy sends me many to be dear
In the great trooping from the dark to dark:
Youths of the bravest, who unto my age
Bear the glad tidings of the life that dwells
Within this teeming land; yet they bring not
What ye have lent me in your hearts and eyes
Of fellow faith and trust: that comes alone

From those who 've loved each other in young
days
When earth is heaven.

FIELDING. Dear mistress, we are gay,
Though we be seeming sad; we bring no groans,
For all our knees are stiff and polls are bare;
Our wits are nimble and our hearts have cheer
For what the dear Lord gives. Send, England's
Queen,
That sorry dame who for these weary years
Hath starved our Hatfield what thou hast of woes,
And frolic with us to the lichyard gate
And merrier beyond.

Voice and Pipe.

Yea, dear mistress, we be merry,
Though our seeming seemeth sad:
Hatfield hath no tears for welcome;
Come, dear mistress, we 'll be glad.

We will forth upon our Maying
O'er thy meadows and thy hills,
Where thy seeing eyes may reckon
How with love thy land o'erfills.

From afar thy folk are trooping,
Clad in pleasure, feet in air,

For the waited day a-Maying
They shall with their mistress share.

We have bidden all the wide world
To our frolic, that they tell
All the others how we welcome, —
Welcome when we love right well.

Pipe goes 'fore us with our choir,
Birds and bees and lowing kine,
New-born lambs that bleat for mothers, —
All shall share our May-day fine.

Piping out the shadowed valley,
Piping up the sunlit hill —

[*Procession disappears. Pipe and voices die away.*

End of Scene.

SCENE III

WOOD *on top of hill on edge of fields giving wide view. Youths and Maidens dancing near by. Bells pealing from distant churches. Noon.*

ELIZABETH, CECIL, *Player, and People.*

CECIL. My liege —

ELIZABETH. Avaunt, avaunt, for thou dost mind me sore
Of a hard gaoler who once made me turn
A weary treadmill, grinding mouldy corn:
May-day hath cast that villain in the deep
Of numb forgetting; there I 'll leave him drowned
Until the ugly trump doth wake again
My day to weary duty. Come, my player,
Thy face doth hail me freedom from the skies;
I 'll on with thee. [*They go to edge of wood.*
[*To Player.*] Good master, lend me eyes,
As thou hast oft before, to see afar.
What lieth 'fore us?

PLAYER. Mistress, the wide world
That England's seas fence in. Here at thy feet
Are happy folk; beyond are hills and dales
With fields that tell the faithful hand of man
In cots and barns that garner love and corn,

Twin stayers of man's days. And on and on
This earth of gold goes rolling to the seas,
While above all, in overarching sky
That rainbow mocks, hovers the glorious sun
Like eagle guarding young.

ELIZ. Look, master, well
And find me there the blackened path of war
In ruined houses and the trampled corn
Red with the reapers' blood; hear there the cry
Of widow weeping for her true man slain,
The maid for lover true.

PLAYER. Nay, mistress, I know there
The bells above their churchyards shouting joy
From all their brazen throats, as if they 'd sent
Long happy years no other cry to heaven;
Where there be ancient holds they 're crumbled low
And ivy mantled. Round their idle walls
Are clustered villages that look no more
On ramparts fringed with steel, or else afar
For hosts to siege them. There abideth peace
And the Lord's plenty.

ELIZ. I am well content.
Would that I saw beyond those further seas,
Beyond those depths of sky, that I might know
What harvest waiteth on this goodly seed.

Yet I 'm content, for my dear folk save well
Their corn that hundred-foldeth from fate's mill
To sow it in hope's fields. Yea, we may trust
This heritage of savings to their hands
And leave with them our hearts. — Let us go on
Where merry piper flings his notes to sky
For nimble feet to catch. [*They go on.*
[*Pointing to old* FIELDING.] He treadeth well
That measure of lang syne. The sap of May
Springs in his ancient veins and in his eyes
The glory of high noon. Ho, see him prance
With wooden leg in air as if the Lord
Had blessed him with but one.

PLAYER. Yea, so he hath;
The other went in brave Armada days;
He 's lighter for such shearing.

ELIZ. Thou know'st him?

PLAYER. Yea, mistress, 't is our craft to know
brave men;
We make them not, but limn them as we may
In sorry semblance tagged with noble names.
We need his like —

ELIZ. To light the common herd
Of nobles satiate with vacant deeds
And proud of emptiness?

PLAYER. Rather to light

The weary throng where'er its sorriness
Doth darken life.

[*Dancers swing* to ELIZABETH.

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, with us tread this measure
Once again on Hatfield green,
That thy children know forever
Here hath danced their lovèd Queen.

Sharer of their toil and pleasure,
Sharer of their joy and pain,
Come, dear mistress, tread our measure,
Dance for Hatfield once again.

We will give thee for a partner
Youth who's merry at fourscore.
When a lad he tripped it with thee;
Bid him trip with thee once more.

[ELIZABETH *dances with* FIELDING *while all sing.*

Now our frolic hath its noonday,
For our mistress shares our May;
Dance it, prance it, lads and lassies,
Hatfield hath her own to-day.

[*Music and dance cease.*

ELIZ. [*to* FIELDING]. Ah, playfellow, it all comes back to me, —
Dear doings of old days. Thou wert well hid
In what thou 'st won and lost.

FIELDING Yea, mistress dear,
I marvelled too if my good lass was hid
In all that haycock of thy furbelows,
But she is there alive; were she well shorn
She 'd foot it with the youngest.

ELIZ. Ay, she would,
And willing stay a milkmaid all her days
In these dear fields where ye all dance life out
And let no sorrow in. How comes it, lad,
Thou hast a peg to match a nimble foot?

FIELDING. That came of dancing, mistress, in the rout
You saw by Dover; music went so fast
I flung it in the sea and had to stump
The measure to the end.

ELIZ. Ho, merry lad,
Thou hadst the heart for it, — a heart that spares
Of valour to thy king.

[BIRON *and Attendants approach.*

Pipe and Voice.

Mistress, now there comes a noble
For thy greeting from his France;

Make him welcome to our frolic,
Bid him, mistress, to our dance.

ELIZ. [*to* BIRON]. Welcome, my lord, to this
our Hatfield realm,
An ancient suzerainty where custom holds
All courts in blessed fields and pipes good friends
To rustic audience.

BIRON. My gracious Queen,
The wide world knows ye mistress of a realm
That rangeth deep and high.

ELIZ. Well said, my lord,
With kingly insight to fit place of kings
And words to win their hearts. — 'T is a small land
That here lies sconced amid the warring seas, —
Scant room for venturing soul, if it but skim
Upon the surface, but with depths and heights
To tempt brave farer and reward his deeds
Of exploration vast in realms unwon.
Yea, I would have you see us as we are,
As I would know your France from cot to throne
And scan its hidden splendours ; but I 'm chained
As galley slave to oar.

BIRON. Dear majesty,
'T is but a step of sea that parts our realms,
And o'er it waits a welcome that no king
Hath ever given neighbour.

ELIZ. I trust that well,
For in my heart I treasure memory
Of how when I was lone and fronted death
There came a bidding from your noble land
To roof tree's shelter, hold where brave men dwelt
With valiant swords to ward. Yea, I 'll to France
When this my task is done, and there begin
My survey of God's realm. Now let us on
To glimpse this bit of it we call our own, —
Fair sample of His favour. [*They go toward dancers.*]
See, my lord,
These folk make merry in a welcome here
And call on all the world to cap their joy,
For they have back their love of long ago:
'T is half a hundred years of memory
That moves their gladdened hearts. Holds faith elsewhere
The generations on from sire to son,
'Scaping the churchyard's silence?

BIRON. Nay, my Queen,
Ye show me here a crown that ne'er hath blessed
The head or heart of king since Arcady, —
A diadem sans thorns.

ELIZ. Yea, this tortures not,
But balms the other's wounds, though sore they be
And fretted deep. Those torments are afar

In that hard prison where our jewels lie;
You 'll see them in fit time. [*They go on to another dance.*] Here courtiers dance
To other measure than our simple folk
And with half-hearted joy. List to their song:

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Court.
We frolic about in these fields
Where the flowers send kisses to eyes
With the lover who knows
How fair is the rose,
Why blossoms look up to the skies.

We dance on the sod that did yield
To the dint of Proserpina's feet
As she flew from the fate
That all youth doth await
To find her swift lover too fleet.

We gather the blossoms let fall
As he bore her forever away, —
Her daffodils prim
And her violets dim
That tell where the maiden did stray.

Here we youths and we maidens all
Tread on in the measure we sing,

For this day is our own
But the morrow for none,
So we dance while the fair blossoms spring.

BIRON. 'T is nobly done.

ELIZ. Ay, in the noble's way,
With a faint sense of gods who are far off
And none of dear Lord here. Yokels for that:
They sing my old heart's song of His own earth
And lusty life upon it. [*To* CECIL.] Cecil, here;
Set this twain kingdom's welcome for our guest,
Have him dance well and right well know our folk;
Then bring him to us in our England's hold.
[*To* BIRON.] My lord, we meet again; alas! elsewhere,
And not in Arcady. [*Parts from* BIRON.
[*To Player.*] We will go down
Into yon vale where evening's shadows creep
For office that hath waited in my heart
Through all our festival this fitting time,
When peace hath come through the dear sense of fields
And love that broodeth there, — to Ashley's tomb.
[*They slowly go down the slope.*

Song and Pipe [*in distance*].
In and out tread swift the measure,
Weaving love in warp of gold;

Weave in it all May-day's pleasure
So it all our joying hold.

So 't will be forever shelter
With its warmth from wintry cold
And our mistress in love's raiment
All her lifetime close enfold.

On the dance: the day is dying,
All's to do and naught is done
Till our golden web is woven;
Shape it ere the set of sun.
End of Scene.

SCENE IV

CHAPEL AT ASHLEY'S TOMB.

ELIZABETH, *kneeling before Effigy; Player a little apart.*

ELIZ. [*rising*]. Come hither, master. [*Player draws near.*] Oh, you knew her not.

PLAYER. Nay, mistress, save in eyes that loved her here
And light at her dear name. That better tells

Than all vain seeing of the moment's sight
Or pictured memories.

ELIZ. Yea, 't is dear life
Still clinging on in living eyes and hearts
That beat beside its own. Alas, it dies
Into the darkness when the lover 's dead, —
Mere dust of memory.

PLAYER. See, mistress, there
The sun goes forth to darkness; soon in sky
Will be forgetfulness of his brave reign
Save glint that stars may send; yet all this earth
Feels day's vast pulses throbbing through the night
And answers to their beat in opening blooms
And song of lark ere dawn. Dear are our eyes,
But they can never show us how in dark
Great day is master still.

ELIZ. [*musingly*]. Ah, I came here
To take her greeting. Here is shapèd stone
As some poor frozen corse hurled from the deep,
A castaway upon the land it loved.
Grim mockery of life. — He bids me know
What passeth mortal eyes; to feel the stir
That quicks this shrouding numbness. Yea, 't is vain;
For death is very death, and we stay lone

With deeps impassable to bar our souls
From love that is no more.

[ELIZABETH *bows weeping. A ray of setting sun falls on image of Ashley, making it glow as with life.* ELIZABETH *looks up.*

Great God! she lives,
Life's music on her lips and in her eyes
A faith that scorneth death. My Kate, my Kate,
I shamed thee with the doubt that thou wouldst die
And leave me friendless here; that our dear Lord
Would chain thee past yon sea and leave me stay
Forever orphaned. Speak, oh, speak to me
That I have heart with word!

[ELIZABETH *stands listening.*

Voice and Pipe in distance.
Now the web of life is woven
Ere the sun hath found the sea;
In it 's all our hope and joying;
It shall to our mistress be

Raiment 'gainst the frost of winter,
God's good warmth when skies are cold;
All the night 't will keep the sunshine
Of this day that ne'er 'll be old.

[*The light fades from the image. Player leads* ELIZABETH *away.*

ELIZ. [*looking back*]. 'T was miracle of God, but it is gone
From earth forever; yet within my soul
It shall forever stay.

PLAYER. Yea, we saw there
The kiss of sun upon a clod of earth,
And love sprung to our eyes. [*They pass out.*

End of Scene.

SCENE V

TOWER OF HATFIELD HOUSE AT NIGHT.

ELIZABETH *and Player.*

ELIZABETH. 'T is good to look into the dark away,
So it be friendly, full of love that sleeps
Beside its loving deeds, — with glint from cot
Where weary toil makes merry, or where watch
The tender eyes that care life in or out
Of God's great hostel.

PLAYER. 'T is friendlier than day,
Yea, like true lover it doth bid us send

Our souls to plant its spaces to our will
And harvest as we may.
ELIZ. Oh, but it holds
That villain Satan in it. Well I mind
How twice of yore I 've gazed within its deep
To see that demon marching o'er my land,
Striding from hill to hill, and with each tread
Setting a balefire's flame to fright the sky
And wake still earth to thunder. First it was
To tell me an immortal shame was done,
When from the north the beacons flared it out
And burnt it on my heart. Again I looked
Into this ancient dark from London Tower
To hear how from the south the clamouring tongues
Cried, 'The Armada 's come,' and on and on
Leaped the swift demon till ere summer's morn
He flamed it to all hearts.
PLAYER. Yea, mistress, still
All hearts hold fast that flame, and on and on
They 'll send it to their sons for thousand years.
They knew it England's morning; still they keep
The brands of that great burning treasured well
Upon the hilltops as the ancients held
Their altars ready for the sacrifice.
And every passer giveth to the store

That waiteth torch to light again their land
In a great burning where men's souls are fused
For noble life or death.

ELIZ. Yea, well I know
The dawn that ushers unto earth the day
Sung in by lark, with all its train of joys:
It cometh not from balefires on our hills;
They breed but roar and ashes, wrack of war
And scars indelible.

PLAYER. Dear mistress, flame 's a tongue
That uttereth many things. — Hark to that song
Of folk that climb yon hill.

Voice and Pipe.

Now our frolic is near ended;
Soon we 'll round it with a sleep,
For our wits and legs are drowsy:
Scarce they 've tugged us up this steep.

ELIZ. Ay, dear folk, ye have danced dull care away.

Voice and Pipe.

'Fore we fare to our forgetting,
We will to all England send
Hail for day all have had with us,
Greeting for its happy end.

ELIZ. My player, thou art fit for mastery
Of pageants 'fore God's throne!

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, see we light bonfires
Where the balefires flared of yore;
Round them all thy folk are dancing,
For those sorry days are o'er.

ELIZ. See, now the flames leap up from every hill
And flicker far until the earth is set
With stars to match the heaven!

Voice and Pipe.

Then they snatched their arms and hastened,
Brave of heart yet sorrowing;
Now their fardels heap their bonfires
While they to thee joying sing:

Shepherd of our England's pastures,
Helper good on all our ways,
Warder of our joy and toiling,
Take the blessing of our days.

ELIZ. [*musingly*]. Here I should die and to that blessing trust
To give me my assoil. — 'T is done, 't is done:
The lights go down and singers to their sleep;
The rest is for the darkness, and our hearts,
Which should be filled for aye.
[*To Player.*] My player, there is sorrow in this joy;

Its gifts, its merry pipe, its frolic dance, —
All hold the during sadness that knows well
How night comes after day.

PLAYER. Yea, mistress mine,
God's realm is rich in springs; but ye now drink
Of all the noblest, for its waters hold
Life's joys and sorrows mingled: those who quaff
Have with immortals drunk the immortal spring
That slaketh thirst of dust. They nevermore
Shall shout of childhood's pleasures or its pains
Or weep by open graves; but silently
Go with their Lord in peace His realm about,
With heart for all its lessons and still joy
For all those lessons give.

ELIZ. Lend me an age,
A thousand years for seeing, and I 'll take
Of thy philosophy for ripened souls;
But this mine own 's still raw, — of clamouring dust
That thirsteth ever for the common springs
That slake our mortal greeds; yet I would drink,
Were it of Lethe, could I win to peace
That holdeth sorrow dear, for I should be
The richest of all shades.

PLAYER. Unto our lips
Kind fate doth press this cup and bids us drink

What we deem bitterness, to find it sweet
From the eternal spring.

ELIZ. So comes the end
Of all this noble pageant, where the love
Of loving folk poured into dusty heart
In streams to bless a desert leaves its sands,
Crying their dearth to heaven.

PLAYER. Yet they have
The waters 'neath them, mighty sun in sky,
And Husbandman who knoweth well His fields:
The harvests dare not lack.

ELIZ. Ah, man, fond man,
Ye 'd cap a pyramid of groans with song
And make us deem it blessed, light mountainous ills
With glint of morning, and lead on our souls
Into the promised land.

PLAYER. Yea, that I would,
For 't is but song and light that makes earth's dust
Be else than hell.

ELIZ. And still souls cry
To be remembered past the great forgetting
That sums all deeds and wipes the score away.

PLAYER. Mistress, this breath that 's ours is but the air
All men have breathed and sent back to the store
Of the wide sky. — Each gives his little share

To everlasting garners whence are fed
All toilers for all time.

ELIZ. But where is love
That brightens morn? The sight of eyes that cheer?
Nay, my wise man, medicaments are vain
To death's immortal wound.

PLAYER. Last night we slept,
And in the sightless dark we found our way
Where nought was save our fancy and the Lord:
Yet it was friendly there, for 't is His realm.
This fear is but the nightmare of our days;
Brave souls know well, e'en while the terror holds,
That it is but a shadow swift to fade
When once they break the spell.

ELIZ. Oh, I have watched
The generations of my people rise,
Fed on their favour while they thought that mine
Was meat and drink to them, so that my soul
Is but an echo of their happiness,
While that doth ring within me I 'll live on;
When it doth fall away then I must die,
Though I be by His throne and hear the song
Of all His angels.

PLAYER. Yea, 't is mortal's need:
So must we on with those near whom we 've fared,

Who know our hearts and faces. A true king
Goes with his kingdom on the endless way;
Or if it be he sleeps, sleeps in the fold
With all who knew him shepherd by his side.

ELIZ. Ah, player, thou art master of that pipe
Men name philosophy and tune to lift
Their minds above earth's dust and glare of sky.
'T is sure not merry music, yet its fall —
Its dying fall — hath might to bear us far.
With thee and our good sage we have a choir
To sing us past our sleep. — This rings as jest,
But it knows sorrow too.

PLAYER. So it should be,
For sorrow at its noblest hath the note
Of merry lark that mounts to joyful day,
Scorning dark earth below. Yea, in the end,
When night eternal surges through Time's halls
And spurns its dwellers forth, a laugh will ring, —
A laugh that tells that life doth know its day
Safe in God's garner, though it sorrowing goes
Forth to a realm unknown.

ELIZ. Good prophet, let us in.
Mayhap this day hath sown seed that the night
Will wake in that hard desert. [*They go in.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VI

BALCONY AT HATFIELD.

ELIZABETH *and Player.*

ELIZABETH. No lark sings up this morn, but sullenly
The weary sun climbs out his tired bed
And sets him to his tasks as though he grudged
His duty by this earth.

PLAYER. But yesterday
Both lark and sun had overmuch to do
To serve their eager mistress. Let them drowse;
They 'll be in fair time merry, when she calls
With merry heart to them.

ELIZ. Oh, my player,
Our heart is not a pipe that we may rule
With breath and nimble fingers as we will
To joy or sadness. All its music 's writ
By the hard fates on their immortal scrolls
For us to render.

PLAYER. Mistress, thou art sad:
What came to dark the night of that fair day
This good world set for thee?

ELIZ. The during shame
Of villain doubt, that masketh all its best

And maketh honesty seem but a guise
Of stalking greeds, made all my happy folk,
Who poured their trusting souls into mine own,
Dance grinning 'fore me all the weary night
Like puppets pulled by strings. It is the ail
That curses kings, that makes them loathe their crowns
And envy poorest vassal who doth trust
His fellow slaves. Ay, thou hast seen me touch
For the King's evil loathsome, stricken things
That hap they 'd heal. But ever as I 've done
This sorest office, I have known my need
Was fearfuller than theirs.

PLAYER. Dear mistress, would that kings
Alone knew of this ill; all share of it,
Though all unknowing how true faith in men
Is health of heaven, lack of it the ail
That most torments the damned.

ELIZ. That is plain said;
Good friend, thou art no courtier, but true leech
That seeth malady, be it of soul,
And way to remedy.

PLAYER. 'T is but a touch,
It needeth but a touch of Master's hand
Sent by His poorest servant, and 't is done, —
This miracle unceasing of all days.

ELIZ. Ah, leech, how come we by that wondrous cure
Until we need no healing? I've touched faith,
The faith of brave and true. — Yea, never king
Hath had such service from the life of man
Laid willing at his feet. — But it hath come
For love of land and throne, for valour's pay
For valour's deeds, — yea, ever with the hands
Outstretched for sorry tokens. Nay, not all:
Some hands were limp in death before was chance
To claim their pay; alas, and one went forth,
To bide the mystery of all my days,
Whom I thanked not for life.

PLAYER. Not yet hath come
His servant for thy need.

[*Sound of Pipe and Singers in distance.*

ELIZ. Yea, but here comes
The moment's cure for that sad ail of kings
In honest country faces. Could I look
All days and nights upon them, I should die
Without my leech's help. Now we 'll to them
For greeting and farewell. [*They go in.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VII

GATE AT HATFIELD HOUSE. *Storm gathering.*
ELIZABETH *and People.*

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, go not from our roof tree,
Shelter good in stormy days:
Let these paths keep thee forever;
Tread not other, weary ways.

Hatfield's earth is full of blossoms
That will spring not if ye hie;
And the host that sprang to greet thee
With thy going swift will die.

ELIZABETH. Dear folk, what goeth is what cannot bide;
But here there stayeth all that God hath given
Of heaven's love and trust. Ye 'll keep my heart
When all else is away.

Voice and Pipe.

Mistress, it is dear to fold thee
In our hearts, but in our eyes
Rather we would living hold thee
As we hold the suns that rise.

Shepherdless thy flock will wander
Hapless o'er the dreary hills,
And the ploughman dream no harvest,
Though he deep the good earth tills;

For the sun will to its setting,
He hath waited unto morn;
He will ask but good forgetting,
For he will be all forlorn.

ELIZ. Nay, nay, dear folk, I 'm sure ye love me well.
For me ye 'll tend the hundred-folding corn,
Nurse well these fields, and care for all their kine,
Though I be far away; — as I shall toil
For all my realm in memory of ye
Who 've made me know earth dear. Alas! we part;
Our eyes shall nevermore share light again
Until we share God's welcome.

Voice and Pipe.

Farewell, mistress, we will treasure
All thy ways but this that took
Our true love from us forever;
There we 'll never, never look.

But to sun that brings the morning
And to first star in the eve

We shall look to find our lover:
Mistress, look, and with us grieve

That this world, of old so merry,
Now's to be a world so sad
For knit hearts that must be parted,
Hearts that were together glad.

[*Procession disappears.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VIII

LOOKING ACROSS THE VALLEY TO HATFIELD.

ELIZABETH, CECIL, *Player.*

ELIZABETH [*to Player*]. Here let me rest and look back on the way
Where in the years of old so oft I 've stayed
To see the glory of the morn and eve
Sweep o'er this noble world. Last time it was
When forth they led me to set England's crown
Upon my frighted head. 'T was morn so fair,
So jewelled in the sky, I thought to 'scape
As some poor fawn from hunters, and to hie
To wood or cot for shelter from the chase
Of hard world seeking for its altar's needs.

'T was fifty years agone, and now I go
Once more to crowning; with like mocking crown
They 'll set upon the image that they bear
In silence to God's house. [*Looks away.*] Alas! see how
The rage of winter, sent to mar this May,
Shroudeth my Hatfield, blotting it from earth
As surge doth blot a name writ in the sand.
So God doth shut us out. [*To* CECIL.] Come, Cecil, now
Thou art once more the master, and thy thrall
Will turn the treadmill of her daily task,
The last of all earth's uses that doth stay
Of the once merry round

PLAYER [*pointing*]. See, mistress, there
The mighty day hath won: the parted clouds
Shrink 'fore its glory, and thy Hatfield lies
As babe in mother's arms.

ELIZ. Yea, God is good
In proving me a sinner in my doubt
That day lives past the night. — Now let us on;
Our task here is accomplished.

End of Act Third.

ACT FOURTH

SCENE I

TOWER OF LONDON.

ELIZABETH, CECIL.

ELIZABETH.

I'M weary, Cecil, and this evil place
Weighs down my heavy soul.

CECIL. Why comes my liege
Through these dark gates when she might keep the air
Of her fair Richmond?

ELIZ. For it is her own,
Hated yet dear, the palace of her race.
All others are mere tents or bowers gay;
This is the seat of time outduring might,
With strength and justice for its seneschals.
'T was a rude day that chained me in these walls,
Watching the axe. And yet 't is fit a king
Should know a dungeon ere he knows his throne:
So doth he learn his part. — Oh, but 't is strange:
There stood the girl before the men they sent

To find her way to death, unfriended, lone,
Until there came that marvel from the fields
To tell her folk beside her in her woe.

CECIL. What came, my Queen?

ELIZ. You know not?

CECIL. It is writ
That Arundel came to you in your plight
To plead for you, though he was sent to judge;
The story saith no more.

ELIZ. That earl was brave
As fits a coxcomb's valour. 'T was well done, —
A pretty touch that showed and had reward;
It did not save.

CECIL. Who came, my Queen, to you
And whence?

ELIZ. Ah, man, 't is long ago. Our histories
Are like the fishers' nets that catch the small;
The mighty things break through. 'T is long ago.
He came and went but thrice, each time to save —
And then he came no more. Sometimes I think
He was my folk incarnate in a youth
Of rugged splendour, seen by me alone,
My noble dæmon. Then I see his eyes:
A dæmon's were not merry, and his danced
With all the frolic of a thousand Mays.
Or hear his quarterstaff upon the casques

Of Wyatt's men when they would bear me forth
To be that villain's banner, — how he drave
The pack before him with his shout and jeer,
And came back for no thanks. 'T was thrice we met;
Each time I owed him life, ay, more than life,
And yet I thanked him not, clutched at his gifts
As babe at offered sweets. Yea, there be kings
Who go uncrowned amid the multitude
With jerkin covered hearts, so big they may
Give unto sovereign, as we to a child,
But to awake their joy.

CECIL. But he 's forgot —

ELIZ. Yea, it is best: he was so natural,
So in and of that day, that with its eve
He passed out as the sun. Mayhap he lives,
Old, bent, and blind, and wonders if the lass,
His England's lass, remembers. Would he knew
Her life is memory of those brave days!

[*They go on.*

Here, Cecil, came, that morn I fronted death,
A little child that brought me a poor bloom
Pale with the prison shadow, frail and wan
As the dear hand that gave it. God alone
Can give such largess; yea, 't was the first light
He sent unto that darkness; from it came

Good heart to face my torment, else I 'd died
For fear of death, or cast me to those wolves. —
[*They go on.*
A thousand years of this have trod these stones.
Oh, they are hard, else they would have worn out
'Neath tramp of sorrow.

Enter Officer of Tower.

OFFICER. My liege, Lord Biron waits your welcome here;
Shall he approach?

ELIZ. Ay, we would have him here.

Enter BIRON *and Train.*

Welcome once more, my lord. The first we gave
Was in our blessed fields; this we give here
Is in an olden house where England's kings
Have held their jewels fast, their arms and crowns
And the hard duty of the law that 's stayed
Their thrones these ages long. 'T is a grim hold,
But richer than our gilded palaces
And meeter for our converse; for here bides
Wealth that they know not in great memories
With lessons for great hearts to bear away.

BIRON. Dear majesty,
Where'er it comes your greeting is the morn.
'T is very good here in your Tower's walls,
The fortress of your realm. I much have known

Of its vast store from one who was my friend,
Though first my foe, — the dearer for the arms
That gave me goodly schooling.

ELIZ. Yea, we know:
You were our kinsman's friend, and when you came
To take our greeting he came back to us.
Ah, ye are strangely like. Who could believe
This agèd earth would bear us such fair twins
To bless a generation! 'T is a bond
That knits you to us. He was very dear,
And his sad passing blotted out our days
And dimmed all light beyond.

BIRON. You are my Queen,
For he my brother made me liegeman true
Unto the liege he loved.

ELIZ. Oh, we knew that
And else to steep our sorrow in the gall
Of bitterness past death. — Let us go forth:
We need the light of heaven for our look
Into the deeps. [*They go out upon a platform.*] Good:
here is blessed day,
Framed by these surly ramparts, yet the day
With air that 's swept the corn. — My lord, thou art
The flower of our France, that once we held
Chained to our throne, now held with bonds of
love;

And eke his kinsman by some fatal tie
That maketh aliens nearer in their lives
Than if they 'd waxed together in one womb
And nestled near one heart. Yea, I am old
And rich in honours, yet I would give all
I 've had and hoped could I the mother be
To two such men, — ay, be a caitiff's slave
Could I have saved them to God's sacred use.

[*She bows her head.*

BIRON. Nay, my noble Queen,
You are the mother of a mighty realm
And all its brave your sons.

ELIZ They are the sons
Of this strong state, but they know me alone
As a hard foster mother who would rule
Their errant wills to order. 'T is fair work
To build this temple of a commonwealth
Shaped out of earth's rude stones. — Come here, my lord;
Look from this cannon's port. What see you there?

BIRON. A mighty town, my Queen, and past it far
A world of fields and thorpes where dwell your folk
In happy myriads.

ELIZ. Many churchyards too,
Where dwells the dust of generations gone,

An hundred fold the living. What hath come
From all this heat of life and chill of death
Unto God's store?

BIRON. Ah, dear my Queen, good joy:
A pinch of dust with life in it breeds joy
That sends its cry to heaven.

ELIZ. 'T is but a cry,
And the far deep sends it no echo back.
My lord, what lives is what we treasure here:
The faith of man to man, stored in the trust
They bear their state; the love that giveth life
So commonwealth may live and be enriched
By ever faithful giving.

BIRON. Yea, my Queen,
'T is true man's part to die for his dear realm.

ELIZ. Ah, Biron, that 's not hard; 't is hard to live
True man and helper of a commonwealth.
That needs man's valour, yet it needeth more, —
The humble, giving heart. All men would rule;
True nobles are born kings, but not elect
To rule their native realms. There is the rub:
They hunger for a sceptre and they set
Their might against their throne, and then they fall
As stars loosed from the sky. — See there, my lord,

Upon our battlements those ugly things:
Know you what they are?

BIRON. Nay, my Queen, I see
That they are strange, no more.

ELIZ. They are the heads
Of half my kindred, — men whom Satan won
To treason's ways. There is thy brother's set
Last of that royal line.

BIRON [*looking intently*]. Great God, 't is true!
This is the gate of hell. [*Turns away faint.*

ELIZ. Oh, no, my lord,
That gate is gay; there merry faces look
With eager becks to lead the farer on
In his presumptuous way. — Thou art a man
And soldier proved on fields, yet thou art sick
Seeing these monuments; a woman I,
Who never saw the slain, and yet I look
Unshaken on them, for they are the proof
That England's law is just and England's throne
Is law's true servant. Know, my lord, a King
Hath such hard duty; if he be a King,
And not a base usurper, he will die
With shame if he doth fail it.

BIRON. But mercy, mercy, —
Where is the mercy that should heal such ills
And spare thy land and name?

ELIZ. It is not here;
Here gentle mercy hides her shamèd head
And bids the law to smite. She hath not lacked
Speech in her fitting place, she oft hath saved.
The last did scorn her: all the prayers of men
Shook not his mighty purpose; so he died
Of his own heart and hand and slew his Queen. —
[*Pauses.*
Oh Biron, take this lesson; see the throne
Is but the law; and how he who doth smite
That law is traitor to his fellow men,
And, if he have a King, will surely die.

BIRON. Alas! my Queen, your words are as the fates
Written in adamantine, — oh, my heart is sore.

ELIZ. So we would have it, that this lesson stay,
With sorrow for thy hurt. God send it spare
Sorer in days to come. — And now we go
Unto our parting: would we could see you past
That gate through which you fare; but we are old
And must upon our journey. — May some light
Come to you when you tell of this hard Queen
Unto your children's sons in some far day
When age hath crowned your honour, and your folk
Watch for your parting. [BIRON *retires.*

ELIZ. [*musingly*]. Cursed are these instruments
of pitiless fate
That men name Kings. They should be born of
flint
And reck no more than does yon empty sky
Of all the storms that sweep it. So might live
A sovereign to the end, in semblance fair
Of mortal flesh, yet be, as he needs be,
At heart a demon set to do God's work.
[*To* CECIL.] Ah, my good Cecil, it was over-
much;
I 'm weary unto death, for I have failed.
There be good hearts that are impenetrate
Even to lessons by the lightnings writ, —
And learn but from their follies. — Here I bide
And sleep the night.

CECIL. My Queen, this place
Hath walls that keep the sorrows of your life;
You should away.

ELIZ. Cecil, they cannot give
More than my soul doth hold. There was a time
When they were loathsome; now there is good
cheer
In their still grimness. They have word for me
As yet half said. 'T was here came up my sun
Upon a stormy morning; here I 'll see

The day go to the night, and wait what comes
If there be morn again.

End of Scene.

SCENE II

THE TOWER.

CECIL, *Lieutenant of Tower, Tire-women.*

CECIL. Her majesty lies here to-night.

LIEUTENANT. Nay, nay, my lord,
This must not be, for in the midnight time
There are strange doings here. 'T is grim the noon;
But in the night 't is fearful: our old guards,
Brave, hardened men, dare not to watch alone,
And from their posts come white and stiff with fear.
It may bring death to her.

TIRE-WOMAN. We shall all die
If we bide here: we 'd willing die for her
In some fit place, not in this charnel-house.
We will away.

CECIL [*to Tire-women*]. Shame on your coward hearts!
Your mistress at your age here waited death
For weary months, unfended and alone,

Stayed by her trust in God ; and now ye shrink
From ghosts that harm not. Get ye to your tasks
And with good merry faces. I will sleep
Beside her door : these spectres know I feared
Nought of their living might, and little care
For their poor ghosts. [*To Lieutenant.*] Double the guards without,
And let them hold their peace, whatever comes
In else than mortal shape. Lie with me there
Where we may haste to her. Nothing will come ;
But if she frights, 't will help if we are by.
Have music near her chamber ; it may give
Her weary spirit peace. [*They go out.*

End of Scene.

SCENE III

QUEEN'S ROOM IN TOWER.

ELIZABETH *and Lieutenant of Tower.*

ELIZABETH. Good warder, we would forth upon the walls :
We know this place by day, yea, much by night,
But as celled captive. We would see our hold
As it hath stood these ages in the dark,
A mighty fortress biding for the dawn,

For the far time when it shall be no more
Than playground of our people, daisied mound
Where children sport.

LIEUTENANT. My liege, 't is dark without;
This is no palace, and its paths are rude:
May 't please you to bide here.

ELIZ. Nay, we will forth
As with another warder on a morn
When it was darker far than in this night.

[*They go forth.*

End of Scene.

SCENE IV

BATTLEMENTS OF TOWER.

QUEEN, *looking forth; Lieutenant.*

ELIZABETH. Dost thou remember, warder, that black morn
When the Armada went by Dover's steep?

LIEUTENANT. Ay, well, my liege, for then I was a youth
Who felt him all a king, for his dear place
Was by you in your guard.

ELIZ. That was a morn!
When our good castle peered above the wrack

Of mighty battle rolling on and on
So that the ancient walls firm set in rock
To their foundations quaked, and all our land,
Knit to one valour, waited for the stroke
That should bear England down. — Yea, now 't is good
To see the lights of peace glint from my town
And far away in land, and know my folk
May to their beds in joy, never to fear
Again such morning.

LIEUT. Ay, my Queen, your deeds
Have builded us a wall this realm about
And stored in it a might none dare assail
To bide with us forever.

ELIZ. Forever is o'er long,
Yet here it is to stay as aught may stay
Where good and ill contend. [*Looking at Tower.*]
These time-worn walls
Are nobler in the night: it is their realm,
And grandly do they rule it. — Like an isle
That lifts its steeps above the eternal sea,
Hurling its surges back, set by the Lord
To be a bound unto that wilderness
Of wasting tempests and fierce treacheries. —
Oh, but how black the darkness 'neath that tower
That heaves its bulk to sky!

LIEUT. See ye aught there?

ELIZ. Nay, warder, nothing there save what we would,
But much thou seest not. We 're here at home
With welcome from the ages of our life
And lives before. — Now we will in and rest.

End of Scene.

SCENE V

WALLS OF TOWER.

RODERICK *and* BARNARD, *Old Officers of the Tower, watching near* QUEEN'S *Chamber.*

RODERICK. Hast thou e'er hungered for a fellow's life?

BARNARD. Ay, I was once a man and knew what 't is
To hear the clamour for the life of knave
Drown that for my dear own.

ROD. What didst thou then?

BARNARD. Whiles to the priest to shrive me ere 't was done;
Betimes the knave hath craved him 'fore did I,
Because his shrift was short.

ROD. Come any back?

BARNARD. Mayhap some do; but mine stay
where they lie
As fits the wights who 've seen o'ermuch of men:
They find it better there, though it be hot.
ROD. Lies not their death upon thee?
BARNARD. Nay, why should 't?
They went to light my load. They are dead
knaves:
This sea swims better with such folk deep down
Upon its quiet floor.
ROD. Ye know what cometh here
To lift our bonnets. List! There, — on that
way, — [*Pointing to shadows.*
The cry of Norfolk haled unto the block.
See! there, the silent train that stately goes,
A woman leading, noble as a queen:
Is it our lady Jane?
BARNARD. Nay, man, thou 'rt wild;
There 's nothing there but moonshine and mad
wits;
They 'll shape the devil in a bit of dark,
But one brave step will chase him. Let us go
And cross it with our swords.
ROD. Hold! that were shame;
For these poor ghosts have here a moment's
draught,

Though it be from the lees of life's good wine,
A sorry drink, yet dear to thirsty souls,
For it hath smack of day.

BARNARD [*looking intently*]. Nay, she thirsts not,
For she is with the Lord. — More like the Queen
They slew at Fotheringay.

ROD. Behold, there comes
Our master, Essex; yea, we knew him well
And may not doubt 't is he. Sorrow and might
Were never set as there upon a man.

BARNARD. I 'gin to be a fool along with thee;
'T is something strangely like, — yea, it is like,
For all it is but fancy and the moon
That sets him here. — I 'll speak to him. [*Goes swiftly to shadow.*] My lord,
I was the comrade of the shape ye wear.
If ye be shade of Essex, speak to me
And send me on your service in this world
Or in that where ye bide.

[*Shade looks towards* BARNARD, *then steps quickly away.*

ROD. He would have spoke;
But then some strange compulsion bore him hence
As if he came here back for certain quest.

BARNARD. Nay, man, it is once more mere phantasy

Whene'er we cross them, they prove but vain
dreams,
Seen in our sleeping eyes we think are wide. —
'T was strangely like; would he had spoke to me,
For even in a dream it would be good
To hear his voice again.

ROD. Old friend, thou know'st
It was our master all save for his dust;
He hath some errand grave, and so doth put
For time his friends aside. Our liege sleeps here;
Mayhap he goes to greet her.

BARNARD. Goes to her?
Would I had guessed his errand; I 'd have stayed
His going with my life, made me a ghost
That I might thwart his purpose.

ROD. Nay, we here
May question not their deeds. He 's dear to her,
And she is near to him; 't is but a step
That parts her from her lover. Hap he goes
To guide her weary feet upon the way:
For that the Lord might send him. 'T were a grace
To lend her such good help.

BARNARD. 'T is Satan's work,
Masked as the Lord's. For those twin kingly souls
Are doomed to rend each other all their days
Here and hereafter. Ay, they lovers be,

But by the devil each appointment hath
To be the other's torment. Let us give
Swift message of this coming.

ROD. Nay, we 're bid
To take no note of shadows. What can we
Against their might? They easy pass our swords,
Leaving our grossness fumbling with the air
While they straight to their deeds. [*A cry is heard.*] Hark that cry
As of a woman kneeling at the block!
Oh God, our Queen hath found now in her hold
The fate Thy mercy spared her!

BARNARD. Let us in:
Mayhap there 's stuff for steel left in this world.

[*They go in.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VI

CHAMBER OF ELIZABETH.

Dim light; Women lying near. A Procession moves in distance. ELIZABETH *starts up.*

ELIZABETH. Where am I? Who are ye that silent come
And make me proud obeisance? — Yea, I know:

This is the end of all. — Come on; my soul
Hath welcome for ye. — Hail, cousin Norfolk,
We sent thee forth to wait us: we are here
To take thy greeting and to give account
Of thy swift going; we have nought to fear;
Our Lord doth know thee well. [*Spirit moves on in silence.*] So 't is no word?
Is silence then the doom for villain lies
Done on yon earth? Ah, then we change no words
In all the age to come. [*Queen of Scots appears.*] Hail, noble Queen!
We met not there below, but all that world
Had not like splendour. Oh, look not so hard
Upon thy rival, for she did no more
Than thou hadst done hadst thou but held her place
With throne to guard. — [*Spirit moves on.*] Go not without a word:
Thou art our sister, and thy greeting here
Would light our weary heart. [*Procession moves on.*] Hail, all ye host!
Had your vast might and valour stayed with us
It were a wondrous England we had left. —
Look not your rage at us: it was our axe
That smote ye here, but 't was your treacherous deeds

That bade it fall. Ay, we will answer give
Unto our God who knows the traitor's work
And stroke it earns. He sent your master forth
And hath not vengeance for the kings who do
Like justice on His earth. Ye bring no fear
To shake us 'fore His throne; yea, be ye there
And say your worst of us. [*Shade of* ESSEX *approaches, slowly.*] Essex, Essex,
Come not in this old darkness to my heart;
Wait till my task is done, until His word
Hath given judgment. — Still it is the dark
That baffled hearts below. — Nay, thou art sad:
Come in the light beyond and I will beg
For sentence to thy realm and bear what comes
For blessed hope. [ESSEX *still approaches* ELIZABETH.] Away, away!
Nor here, my Essex, for the night lives on
In this foul limbo with its shame and hate.
[ESSEX *moves swiftly to her.*
Ho! he would slay me. [*Shrieks and wakes.*

Enter CECIL.

CECIL. Oh, what harms my Queen?
ELIZ. Where am I, Cecil?
CECIL. Here, my Queen, and safe;
Here in your hold with all your folk to fend.

ELIZ. Oh God, he smote me back into this life;
Was ever deed so foul!
CECIL. Nay, 't was a dream:
None have been near you; we have watched you well
Through all the night.
ELIZ. Oh, no, for I was there,
Waiting God's judgment, for my task was done,
When here he hurled me back.
CECIL. What 's here been done
Weighs on thy soul?
ELIZ. Nay, they came all to me.
I feared them not; for justice gave me stay
Until he came and slew me back to earth;
Unheard, unjudged.
CECIL [*aside*]. Was ever dream
So foul contrived as this?
ELIZ. Take me away:
This place is horrible; for in that dark
I see his dagger that doth bar me thence,
Denying way to God.
CECIL. Dear majesty,
'T is now the dead of night: bide till the morn;
Then we will hence.
ELIZ. Away! Ere cock doth crow

Beside this hold, that knife will pierce again.
Send me once more to death, if there be room
In all God's realm to die. Oh, let me creep
Into the earth and hide me in a grave
Where waking comes not. — Let me to my folk, —
Yea, to the vilest who sleep in the streets, —
That I may lay me by their sinful hearts
And there forget this shame.

[QUEEN, CECIL, *and Attendants go forth into the darkness.*

End of Act Fourth.

ACT FIFTH

SCENE I

PALACE.

CECIL *and Dames of the Court.*

CECIL.

HOW is her majesty?

DAME. So low of heart; She takes nor food nor rest. Whatever came
To fright her there stays with her ceaselessly;
She raves of him, yet trembles at his name
And rages if we speak it.

CECIL. 'T is mere dream
That lasteth past the waking.

DAME. Nay; she saw
More there than we, and our hearts still are cold
With what came in that night.

CECIL. Go to with that!
I watched the night out there beside her door;

All was at peace until she started up
As child from out its sleep. Ye help her spin
This fatal web of fancy round her soul.
She 's old and worn, — that second childhood comes
When darkness frights again. Make light of it
And keep all bright about her: 't is the time
When all who owe her grace must seek her joy,
Wear merry faces, hail the morn to her,
And plot for morning when the night shuts in,
So it be but a step.

DAME. But we saw there —

CECIL. As all may see ye are a pack of fools, —
Cracked wits who slay her. Go no more to her:
I 'll find some wholesome wenches for your task
Who 've helped their grannies die and know as well
To nurse a life out as to help it in.

End of Scene.

SCENE II

QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

ELIZABETH, *with sword piercing hangings.*

ELIZABETH [*alone*]. Slay, slay, my task is still to slay. Oh God,
Why hast thou made this woman for such deeds
And shut her out from death?

Enter CECIL.

Come, Cecil, come
And pluck this sword from out my palsied hand.
You set it there a weary age agone:
Break it to dust and cast it in the deep
That it may no more harm. — Bind me in chains
So that the demon who hath me enslaved
Use me no more for murther.

[CECIL *goes to her, takes the sword, and leads her to couch.*

CECIL. Rest ye here.
This is mere idle fancy, for my Queen
Hath given life, not death, unto her kind.

ELIZ. Nay, hadst thou seen the weary host that went
From dark to dark beside me, thou wouldst know

The blood that 's on my soul. He was the last;
So God appointed him to hurl me back
Upon this reeking earth.

CECIL. Nay, my dear liege,
I looked upon you all the while you slept;
What came to you comes to a weary child
Of frighting dreams the sun was made to send
Back to the dark. Forget it in this day
When God wraps earth in glory. — Wake you now;
'T is not your wont to marvel.

ELIZ. Oh, my wont!
All wonted things are strange. I 'm in a maze.
I knew thee not, my Cecil, — saw thy sire;
In thy dear crooked shape I thought him shrunk
Before that woeful vision. Have me forth;
Mayhap my fields will cleanse me.

CECIL. Would ye go
To see an ancient soldier who doth pray
His Queen may look once more on his blind eyes
And bless his passing?

ELIZ. Ay, that I will do;
It will be good to see a brave man die
Who goes in hope, who fancies I can give
Blessing to help him there. Who is the man?

CECIL. His name we know not, though he 's dwelt an age
Beside your gate, — much as an ancient dog,
Watching his master, asketh nought but chance
To nip a knave who cometh over near.
Your people know him well: e'en since he 's blind
They trust his scent of danger, for he knows
Who comes by some strange sense; he 's often warned
When warning else had lacked. Yea, he hath been
Your surest warder.

ELIZ. Why knew I not of this?
Such service lifts my heart.

CECIL. So 't was his will
Ye should not know: 't was in his mind to give
And have no pay; else here he would not bide.
The beggar 's proud: he hath his bit of land
That gives him bread; he seeketh for no more.
He 's of your yeomen who have stayed your throne
Since time men set it here.

ELIZ. Beggar forsooth!
I go beside a king who largess gives
With thought of no return, whose head is crowned
With faith like this. Haste! let us forth to him.

[*Exeunt.*

End of Scene.

SCENE III

A COTTAGE.

Dying old man in bed. Old woman by him.

Enter ELIZABETH *and* CECIL.

ELIZABETH. Peace be with ye. [*Goes to bedside.*

CECIL. He is the man who came
Beside ye in the throng: you took his hand
And thanked him for his greeting.

ELIZ. He is more;
Death brings him youth again. Where, where? —
The deep hath sent him back. — Oh Robin, Robin!
At last thou 'rt here. [*Taking* ROBIN'S *hand.*

ROBIN. Our England's lass is good:
I knew she 'd bless an old man when he asked
Her touch before he went. I go away
Leaving my watch before 't is time to go,
For she bides here. I will her coming wait
There at His port and ward her in His realm
If she hath need of warding.

ELIZ. Would I were there:
With thee beside me, Robin, I were safe,
Whoever might assail.

ROBIN. Our England's lass!
All worlds will lend her shelter, for our Lord
Knows her His faithful servant.

ELIZ. Nay, Robin,
This world is very ill. What our eyes saw
When God's day blessed them with its hope and joy
Hath turned to dust before us. E'en our fields
Are lean of men to keep this England's realm;
They give no more of harvests.

ROBIN. Yea, our lass
Is sick as on that day of long ago. —
[*Raises himself and points from window.*
Look forth, my Queen, and see your noble land;
When you came here to rule it, it was sere,
For evils sapped its root. See how it blooms;
See all our youth who bless ye, for they know
Ye opened them the ways of field and deep;
Hear of the old who die, — how they have fared
Along the happy ways that ye made safe
And blessed with love that never king before
Gave to a loving folk. Look forth and live
Forever here and there. [*Sinks back insensible.*

ELIZ. Farewell, dear heart;
Thy parting leaveth peace. — Into yon dark
I 'll follow thee unfearing.

ROBIN. Hail! Christ, I come,
The herald of my Queen.
[ROBIN *dies.* ELIZABETH *kneels beside him.*

ELIZ. [*prays*]. Have mercy, Lord,

Upon Thy servant, he Thy faithful priest
Who led this woman from her night to day;
Give her to have him still when sight grows dim
As Thou dost part the body and the soul,
For light upon her way. [*Rising, she closes* ROBIN'S *eyes.*] Oh dear blind eyes,
That saw so well and true, that fearless see
God on His throne. [*To* CECIL.] This dust belongs to them;
His heart Christ's own on earth ever to bide
Helping all faithful lest they sink and die
As cowards by their graves. — Faith, faith, true faith,
I 've sought thee far for half a hundred years
At last to find thee dead beside my door
Where thou hast dwelt alway. Nay, nay, not dead,
But gone as seed to earth, God's word to hearts
To spring forever in true faith of man.
[*To Woman.*] Thou wert his wife?

WIFE. Yea, yea, he 's all mine own.
We are not parted; though he lies here dead
He 's but a step away. I 'll soon to him;
He 'll wait me, my true man.

ELIZ. My dame, this world
Doth set some chosen on its noble thrones

And crowns them with wide realms, but never king
Hath from it diadem to match thine own
In this man's faithful love. Yea, the bare crumbs
Of what he gave thee is all they can have
To keep their souls from starving; and they hope,
If they be hopeful, in the trust that heaven
Hath like to still their pain. We 'll weep awhile
Together by this silence; then we 'll cry
Hosannas to the Lord who sent him here
To stay our hearts; who bade him on before
To guide our trembling feet beyond the dark.

[ELIZABETH *bends over widow; then, rising, looks away.*

CECIL. My liege is sorely worn.

ELIZ. Nay, Cecil, strong:
My limbs are nerved as when in that far day
He sprang before the block and hurled them back
Who drave me on to it; or on that morn
When forth he called my fevered soul and sent
Earth's glory for my healing. I have health,
God's health to stay me on the way I go;
For he is not a phantom but a man.

End of Scene.

SCENE IV

THE TOWER.

CECIL *and* BACON, *looking forth.*

CECIL. Our sun goes down.

BACON. It sets into a storm,
A weary wrack of storm, and the fair sky,
With dawn of morning new, waits far away. —
Is she at peace?

CECIL. Alas! there is no peace;
For the fierce life of body fights to stay
And rends the soul with battle for its right,
Screaming with terror at the utter death
That waits its weary dust. Her Tudor strength,
Earth loving, holds to earth; her better part
Clamoureth to be free. The mighty fear,
That once o'ermastered, hath now slunk away,
Shamed by that ancient's valour. She has now
Only the sorry mortal part to do
That lies 'twixt life and death.

BACON. This life is good,
And past it lie wide fields where good must lie,
For they be wide; and yet a space between
Is the abode of beasts all fierce and foul.
Happy the man who leaps it at a bound,

With sword in hand and victory in eyes,
To light before God's throne, — whose eager heart
Doth know one beat on earth, the next in heaven. —
We have our comfort knowing in these pangs
The soul doth stay above them. What we see
Of choking breath and vainly clutching hands
Comes not of what we take, but what we leave,
That striveth 'gainst the parting when it sees
The dear companionship is nearly done.

CECIL [*absently*]. What of our morrow?

BACON. Here?

CECIL. Ay, when she 's gone.

BACON. She 's made that for us and the sun she 'll see
No more will shine upon her England, — safe,
Because 't is hers and evermore shall be
Bred of her valour, nurtured by her love,
Firm founded on the trust she gave her folk:
Care not for that — the worst can only mar.

Enter Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN. It comes, my lords, it comes; and in her eyes
We see she 'd have ye near. [*Exeunt.*

End of Scene.

SCENE V

THRONE ROOM OF PALACE.

ELIZABETH *on cushions beside throne.* LORD HOWARD, SIR ROBERT CAREY, *Physicians and Ladies.*

LORD HOWARD [*aside to Physician*]. How near is it?

PHYSICIAN. My lord, 't is very near.
'T is a lost battle verging to its end;
'Fore night she will win peace.

ELIZABETH [*to* HOWARD]. Good cousin, let me drink. I 'm dry at heart. [*Drinks.*
That stays my burning. — Good Lord, give me sleep, —
Thy staying sleep.

LORD HOWARD. My liege should to her bed.

ELIZ. Nay, nay, for in that bed I 've seen dire things
I dare not face again. My guide is far,
Yet there; I hear his voice and still am brave.
But if that other comes, — yea, then I die
Into the utter dark. I long no more,
Save for God's blessed sleep. [*She sleeps.*

LADY. She dies, she dies!

PHYS. Nay, dame, be still, for yet she may awake;
'T is a rude cry you send. [ELIZABETH *wakes.*
ELIZ. Nay, not so swift;
For I am old and weary, and ye go
Quick on this way.
CECIL. My Queen, you cannot rest
Here in this sorry way; you must to bed.
ELIZ. Ah, little man, 'must' is not for kings' ears, —
Were thy great father here, he durst not give
Command unto his Queen. Thou know'st I die
And wax presumptuous. — Nay, that is too hard;
For thou hast served me well and with true faith,
Albeit thine eyes have long looked far past me
To signs of him who comes. — I pardon that;
So part we as good friends.
CECIL. My Queen, my Queen —
ELIZ. Nay, I know all and pardon. Let that be
The finish of it. [*To* BACON.] Ah, my philosopher,
Your wisdom bides with me in my sore pain;
It is remembered well, though here I lie
A sullen hulk upon the sands of time,

Waiting the sea that whelms me. [*Sinks back.*] Oh,
dear guide,
Thy voice is near. — Now would I be alone
With but my kinsmen by me and my priest.
[*Others go out silently.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VI

ROOM IN PALACE.

BACON *and* CECIL.

BACON. What hast thou done with Scotland that
she knows
And sets against thy faith?

CECIL. What needs be done
To keep this realm in safety, — what she would
Had it been hers to do.

BACON. It smote her hard,
For she doth hate him, and to feel his hand
Upon her crown is bitterer than death.
'T was an ill deed; 't were better thou hadst left
This creeping to the knaves.

CECIL. It is my task
To serve this kingdom; it has been my joy
To serve my Queen and none have faithfuller

Stood 'twixt herself and ills. — Those deeds are done
And time may reckon them. He who comes here
Comes as a king; his way needs be prepared.
So had she willed it had she not been slain
By that would-be usurper: what now goes
Is but the wreck he left, the mangled life
He still doth rend.

BACON. Yea, but she loves him still;
He left his villain here and bore away
The noble that it hid.

CECIL. She loves no more,
For in that night he sent her some strange fear
That conquered her. She hath a woman's soul
And needs to lean upon the strength of man.
God sent her that brave yeoman for a guide
And now she clings to him: he leads her on
Where no one else can help.

BACON. He is her folk
Summed in a single life of faithfulness
Laid at her feet. [*Exeunt.*

End of Scene.

SCENE VII

CHAMBER OF THE QUEEN.

ELIZABETH *on couch, dying;* HOWARD, CAREY, *Archbishop of Canterbury, and Women.*

ELIZABETH. Let me have music, for this place is still
And groweth dark: 't will echo me his voice.

[*Music plays; choir sings.*

Star of the morning shining in our night,
Guiding in darkness to our dear God's day,
Cloud shall hinder never; Thou dost shine forever,
Leading weary pilgrims on Thy blessed way.
Dear are our fields that send their harvests home;
Night is upon them yet Thy star doth keep
Watch of their glory, ward of all their hope,
So that the true hearts may their harvest reap —
What though the sea may whelm us in its waves,
What though the night stay ever, yet His star
Knoweth His way and leadeth to His feet —

ELIZ. My people, Oh my people!
WOMAN. Her last cry. —

HOWARD [*to Archbishop*]. Lend her His comfort, for the trial comes.

ARCHBISHOP [*kneeling*]. Oh God of all, Oh Christ, who knew our death
That Thou mightst help Thy servants in their pain,
Come to this faithful woman, hold her fast
In Thy strong arms and hush her heart to fear.
Oh God, she is Thy child, she goes to Thee
All weary, stained, and broken by this world
Where she hath been Thy servant all her days;
Yea, faithful e'en in sin, for she hath loved
Thy sheep and sheltered them in every storm,
Loved all Thou gav'st of glory to this earth,
Thy blessed fields of land and sea and sky,
And in them loved, unknowing, Thy dear self.
Save her, Oh Lord, that we have hearts of joy
When we come to Thy house to find her there.

[*Pauses.* ELIZABETH *opens her eyes.*

Dear Christ, we know Thee near, for in her eyes
We see Thy glory light her parting soul;
She goeth from us, but our hearts are glad
In all our sorrow, for she goes to Thee, —
To peace eternal and the hope of days
In Thy green pastures and Thy quiet folds.
Remember, Lord, how she hath suffered long
In the fierce anguish that Thy servants bear

Who rule the kingdoms of this earth to Thee.
She goeth as the soldier who doth hie
From hard-won fight with battle in his heart
And soul all wounded. — Comfort her, Oh Lord;
Hearken the prayer that riseth from this land
Unto Thy throne, that Thou wouldst know their love
And bless it with Thine own.

WOMAN. Oh, now she sleeps.

ARCHBISHOP. Ay, in Christ's arms she sleeps, a little child
Upon her way to God.

End of Scene.

SCENE VIII

THE WAY TO WESTMINSTER.

Throng silently waiting.

BLIND OLD WOMAN [*to Child*]. What see'st thou, child?

CHILD. A world of people, dame;
They all are still.

OLD WOMAN. Ay, it is still as night. —
Child, I remember when she came this way

To take her crown. It was a whirlwind then,
We sang and cried for joy ; and now she comes
To find her grave. 'T was fifty years agone,
And Smithfield's embers smouldered on yon hill.

CHILD. See, granny, they all kneel.

OLD WOMAN. See for me, child ;
I see no more.

CHILD. And now it comes afar ;
And now the folk lament.

OLD WOMAN. What see they there ?

CHILD. Herself upon the bier all robed and crowned
And in her hands her sceptre. She is fair
As Queen may be.

OLD WOMAN. 'T is but her image, child ;
Her body, old and worn, is hid within,
Too sad for seeing.
Cry, ye people, cry, —
Cry to our God for joy that she hath been ;
Cry in our woe, for she hath from us gone.
Send us, Oh Lord, good shelter in our need ;
Save us, Thy people, from the wolves she drave
Forth from these fields. Remember, Lord, our pain
We bore so long before she came to be
Thy faithful shepherd. Send her soul, Oh God,

To stay Thy servant who doth take her crown
That we may burn no more.

OLD MAN. Oh Christ, dear Lord,
Have mercy on Thy people. Give her folk
To go the way she went in faith to land
With trust in Thee. Give us the strength to bide
Good warders of Thy hold she kept for Thee,
So that no battle raging o'er the seas
Nor foes in heart may harm Thy faithful realm.

[*Procession enters Abbey, choir singing.*

Lord, to Thy house we bear her body in;
Give it Thy shelter, keep it in Thy love;
Take from her soul the stain of all her sin,
Lead her, O Lord, unto Thy heaven above.

Hail, land and sea, your lover, who doth go
Unto her rest, for she was brave and true;
Hail her, ye folk, for never here below
Cometh a lover to her love so true.

CHILD. They 've gone into God's house, and all is still:
Shall we go there?

OLD WOMAN. Nay, child, now lead me home;
'T is dark in my old heart, and God's own day
Alone can give me morning. She is dead

We blind folks stayed to see. Ah, while she lived
There was good light for us: we loved her well;
Yea, when our hearts were sorest, in her words
We found the hope we longed for. Oh my child,
'T is a scant world without her. — Not so fast,
For I am old and weary. — She is gone.

[*Is led away by Child.*

End of The Passing of the Queen.

EPILOGUE

HERE lies a woman dead who mother was
Unto a land of men. She knew its fields
And loved them with a love that harvest saw
Even in winter's dearth, and counted gains
In noble youth unborn. Here lies she still
As a mere clod turned by the plough of fate
And trodden in its furrow.

There is a silence in this land she made
Merry with hopeful days: in tower and cot
They bow them weeping; yea, her ancient foes
Look sadly down the way where she hath gone,
As those who 'd blistered 'neath the fiery sun
Would look upon his setting if they knew
Thereafter came no morn.

There is a silence on the sea she gave
The glory of brave deeds. The ships that come
Over the arch know sorrow in the pall

That hangs o'er waited port. The ships that go
To far-off lands have sorrow for their freight;
A sad, reluctant burthen they must bear
To realms whereto her soul once filled the sails,
Bearing brave messages.

THOU who from the darkness sendest death
To guide our days, to tell Thou dost abide
Within this mystery that shapes our lives,
Help us to know Thy glory in the sign
Set in these mortal shapes, Thy messengers
Who are for time our kings. Help us to see
What it doth mean that they from lasting dark
Bring to our eyes Thy light, then hie away
Unto Thy silence.

The night forgetting lark climbs up the sky,
Leaving his trail of song. The falling stars
That live a moment in the firmament
Cast glory in their train as on they go
Again to darkness. But these heralds true
Who wear Thy blazon on their noble fronts,
With everlasting trumpets from the vault
That compasses Thy realm, hail Thee their Lord.

As in an ancient wood where majesties
Sprung from king-making earth, together lift
Their mighty crowns unto o'erarching sky,
Each shaping other as through noble years
They gather strength from sun, so grew she there
In the great forest of her English folk,
Waxed to her ripened splendour 'fore her fall;
Then in the waiting stillness of a morn
When, storms forgot, the ranger hies him forth
Into the shadowed silence all unstirred
Save by the far-up chanting of the birds
Or hum of swarming bees that seek new hives,
Afar he hears a roar as some great ship
Faring on unseen sea had cast away
Upon a sightless strand: a sullen roar
And then the silence of the closèd deep, —
So knows the ranger his brave monarch gone
Unto the dust he treads.

She came at even to that western sea,
The noble journey ended. Of the realms
That rose to greet her, there is left the sands
Trod by the wintry surge of memory.
And to the vast unfathomable went
The sun that lit her faring, — sun that shone
To her glad eyes from out the eyes of men

Wherein she found the very light of heaven.
That light went to the deep, and she died there
With it into the darkness.

Her brave days
This earth shall know no more, and yet they glow
As twilight on the verge of earth and sky
To tell that past our winter marches on
The glorious pageant unto far-off lands.
Sing of the morning, ye who bide in night
And keep the welcome of awaited day
Ringing before his portals. Cry ye wait
Stout-hearted 'gainst the siege of all his foes,
And willing die upon the battlements
Ye hold for him.

HERE part we from this woman as men part
From leader brave who gave them victory,
When by their planted banners, in the grave
They silent earth his dust. All washed away
The stains of battle by his comrades' tears,
Forgot all lesser in the greater deeds
Done faithfully for man. They are bowed down,
Stilled by their mournful office, but their hearts

Sing like the bugles when he hurled them on
As conquering sea against the foeman's wall.
Now earth 's upon his splendour, forth there rings
The prophet's cry to Time that they have laid
The seed of empires in that new-made grave,
That death is life so life be nobly lived;
The tomb its changeless throne; its dust a crown
Jewelled by love of man.

Ah, here we know
That sorrow vast and vain for ages gone,
For beauty turned to dust, for voices still
That waked forgotten love to ecstasy,
For all the souls we know kin to our own
With whom we never can exchange a cry
Across the gulf that parts us. — Give to Time
His fill of our dear store; let to his sea
Go down our treasured earth, and sun, and stars,
Until the all is void, if he but send
Back to our hearts the hearts of other days:
Then will the spaces glow as never yet
For all their orbèd splendours.

FAREWELL, ye shadows, dear substantial shades
Who once ennobled realms yet stooped to grace
Our day with light of many a vanished face
And tale of deeds immortal. — Now it fades,
That vast procession, and the dark invades
The wide arched days we looked on ; yea, the place
Shrinks to this earth ball where the idle chase
Of living ghosts the ways ye trod degrades. —
But look again : behold, it opens wide,
That starry realm all lit with light of eyes
The dark can never quench. Once more it glows
With the eternal dawning that arose
When He bade men to be, and to it hies
The comrade brave who parts him from our side.

Farewell, dear mistress, master of our days,
Thy mighty sceptre, jewelled with the names
That paved thee paths of empire through war's flames
Or in the hearts of men, points on to ways
Thy children aye shall tread. Thy subject stays
Abashed before thee and would hide his shame
For what is done and undone in the game

That fancy free with majesties e'er plays.
He 'fore thy lifted might would with thee plead
'T was thy enfranchisement that made him free,
And, if that serves not, ere thou hast his head,
O noble Queen, take thou his heart instead,
For in his seeming sport all reverently
He laid upon thy shrine each idle deed.

Come to the hearth whereon we lit of old
For old hearts' warming faggots from the wood
Where shaped the Armada's ships. Yea, it was good,
Though 't was but foxfire and our blood stays cold.
The flame is out, the beakers drained, their gold
Cast to the hungering sea, and the brave mood
Our song from darkness to our day there wooed
Hath gone to emptiness; the tale is told.
Yet past the deep mayhap 't will ring again, —
That everlasting tale of brave and true,
Of men and women who on earth swung free
As stately planets in the stellar sea,
Swayed by the might of God; and we anew
And nearer know the glory of that train.

The End.

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